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HISTORICAL STUDIES NO. 2

KING OF KINGS TEWODROS OF ETHIOPIA

BY SVEN RUBENSON

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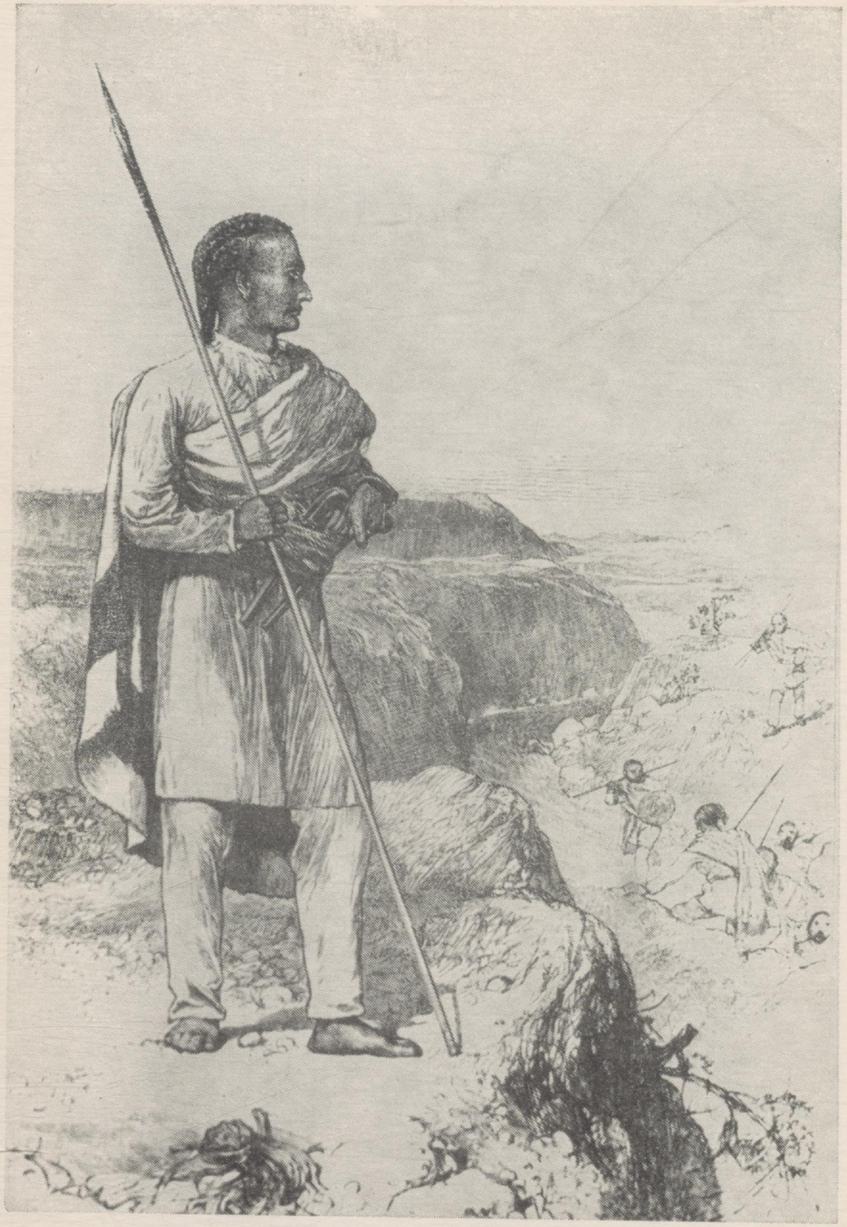
KING OF KINGS
TEWODROS OF ETHIOPIA



KING OF KINGS TEWODROS OF ETHIOPIA
From Hormuzd Rassam, *Narrative of the British Mission to Theodore*

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KING OF KINGS TEWODROS OF ETHIOPIA

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PREFACE

This study of Emperor Tēwodros is not much more than a biographical sketch. It is by no means a complete history of his reign, and many events and aspects of his life have either been treated summarily or omitted. The justification for its publication lies, I believe, mainly in the fact that I have concentrated on the least known aspects of his life — his political and family background, his rise to power, and the relationship between him and his own people — rather than on his conflict with the foreigners and the Meqdela campaign, of which so much more has been written.

Thanks to diligent editors and publishers of Ethiopian chronicles as well as to the British government of one century ago, I have been able to base the study largely on printed material: the chronicles of the late Gonderine period published by Carlo Conti Rossini and H. Weld Blundell; the three known chronicles of Tēwodros' own life, first published by Enno Littmann, Casimir Mondon-Vidailhet and Luigi Fusella respectively; the accounts of the European travellers just before and during Tēwodros' time; and the documentation of Tēwodros' reign presented in the British *Parliamentary Papers*. The latter include almost everything of value on Tēwodros that reached the Foreign Office in London. A comparison between the public collection, the *Confidential Print* of the Foreign Office and the original documents show that the omissions are mainly concerned with the often strained relations between the foreigners in Ethiopia, thus throwing more light on the characters of these men than on the person of Tēwodros. References to archival material have been made only in the case of a few documents, mainly in French and Egyptian archives.

It would be impossible for me to list the names of all those who at one time or another have assisted me in my research on Tēwodros. I have met with friendly cooperation from the keepers of the French and British Foreign Office archives and the Abdine archives in Cairo. The facsimile reproduction of Tēwodros' letter to Queen Victoria is published by permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office. I am indebted to two of Tēwodros' descendants, His Excellency Dejazmach Kasa Meshesha and Fītawrarī Mengesha Bezabih, for their kind assistance in the collecting and verifying of oral tradition. Many of my colleagues and students at the Haile Sellassie I University have shown interest in my work and assisted me in various ways. I want to thank in particular Ato Mesfin Wolde Mariam of the Department of Geography and Dr. Getachew Haile, Dr. Amsalu Aklilu and Ato Alemayehu Moges of the Department of Ethiopian Languages for very helpful discussions.

Whatever errors of fact or judgement my readers might discover are, needless to say, my own responsibility, and I welcome any criticisms which might lead to a better understanding of the life and work of one of the most interesting personalities in the history of Ethiopia.

Addis Abeba S. R.
February, 1966

CONTENTS

Preface *p.* 5

List of Illustrations *p.* 8

Map *p.* 10

I The Problem of Tēwodros *p.* 11

II The Political and Family Background of Tēwodros *p.* 15

III Kasa's Rise to Power 1840—1855 *p.* 35

IV King Tēwodros — Personality and Politics *p.* 46

V The Road to Failure *p.* 67

VI Conclusion *p.* 90

Index *p.* 93

Key to Transliteration *p.* 99

ILLUSTRATIONS

King of Kings Tēwodros *frontispiece*

The castles of Gonder *facing* p. 32

Ruins at Fenja p. 33

Tēwodros' letter to Queen Victoria in 1862 p. 48

Tēwodros in 1863 and his seal p. 56

Abune Selama p. 57

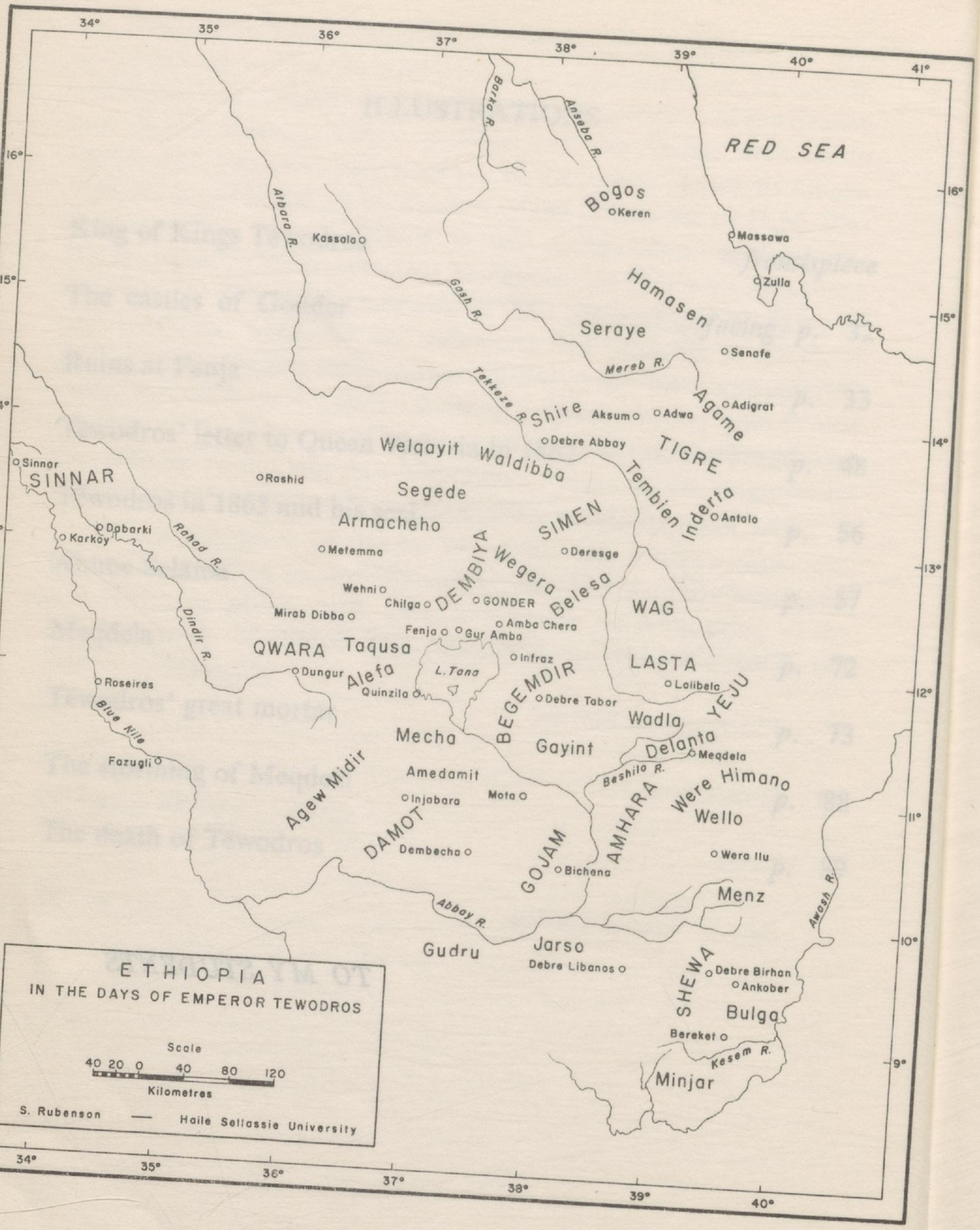
Meqdela p. 72

Tēwodros' great mortar p. 73

The storming of Meqdela p. 88

The death of Tēwodros p. 89

TO MY STUDENTS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I

THE PROBLEM OF TEWODROS

The life and reign of Tēwodros, King of Kings of Ethiopia 1855—1868, provides exciting material for novelist, dramatist and scholar alike. Popular interest in his story among his own countrymen has resulted in two dramas, of which he is the central figure, and a historical novel, largely in dialogue form, where he is at least the second main person.[1] That Ethiopian poets have found his awe-inspiring personality, his astounding career and his tragic death rewarding themes is evidenced by Ato Alemayehu Moges' recent collection of Ethiopian poetry.[2] Tēwodros can be presented as the poor fatherless boy, who against all odds worked and fought his way to the throne in order to unite and save his country, or as the *shifta*, the highwayman, who usurped the throne and instituted a reign of terror, violence, and destruction. In Ethiopian folk-lore he is the lion *par excellence*, he who challenged every enemy in sight—and some from across the seas as well—and who preferred to die by his own hand rather than surrender. He is supposed to have planned to capture no less a city than Jerusalem, and to marry no less a woman than Queen Victoria. It is no wonder that he has caught the interest and imagination of his countrymen.

Tēwodros' reputation has varied. While his name in the past was almost a byword for terror, there is a tendency among the younger generation of Ethiopians today to see him as the symbol of all that is dearest to their hearts: equal opportunity for all, bold and progressive policies, and the unity and greatness of Ethiopia. Among the literary works it is the novel *Ṭaytu Biṭul* that pictures him most definitely as the villain, and the latest drama that makes him a hero.

---

[1] Girmachew Tekle Hawaryat, *Tēwodros, Tarikawī Drama* (Addīs Abeba, 1949/50); Tsegaye Gebre Medhin, *Tēwodros* (unpublished); Mekwennin Indalkachew, *Ṭaytu Biṭul* (Addīs Abeba, 1957/58).

[2] Alemayehu Moges, *Ityopyawī Qinē* (Addīs Abeba, 1962/63).

Even outside Ethiopia the memory of Tēwodros is occasionally revived, most recently by the well-known author Alan Moorehead in *The Blue Nile*. His account is distinguished by that blend of fact and fiction which, coupled with a careful selection of all the most interesting episodes, makes enjoyable reading. He introduces Tēwodros to his readers with the startling statement: "It has always been accepted that the Emperor Theodore was a mad dog let loose, a sort of black reincarnation of Ivan the Terrible and the Russian tyrants, and so he was in many ways, even by the savage standards of Ethiopia itself." He then makes some half-hearted reservations on the theme that "there was no real method in his madness", for he was "like a child who knows that he is doing wrong".[3] Having thus established the character of the King, the author proceeds to record his admittedly erratic dealings with the British—on the authority of the British, his captives and enemies.

Although Moorehead is in good company with most European writers on Tēwodros, the view he propounds is not as universal as we are led to believe. In fact, contradictory views about much of what Tēwodros said and did and in particular about his character can be traced back to his own contemporaries, Ethiopians and foreigners alike. This is for the serious historian one of the most interesting aspects of a study of Tēwodros' life and reign. Another aspect, which raises intriguing questions, is the seeming incompatability between the high hopes entertained about him while he was still fighting his way to the throne and the tragic end to his life at Meqdela some fifteen years later. To the spectators his downfall seemed as inevitable as his rise to power. Had he changed that much during the years between, or was he misjudged at one end or the other of his career?

One need only go to the dispatches of the British Consul Walter Plowden at Massawa to sense the kind of impression Tēwodros

---

[3] Alan Moorehead, *The Blue Nile* (New York and Evanston, 1962), p. 205 f.

must have made while he was still Dejazmach Kasa and to all intents and purposes a rebel against the Imperial Government. Although Plowden was personally acquainted with, and on friendly terms with, most of the other important chiefs in Ethiopia, Kasa had barely emerged as one of the contenders for supreme power before Plowden endorsed him as "the most desirable".[4] While the outcome of the struggle was still in the balance, Plowden again and again returned to the same theme: "If Dejaj Kasai succeeds in his bold attempt...there will still be some hope for Abyssinia;"—"Should Kasai be the victor...I shall then hope that something may be effected for Abyssinia, even in its internal administration by the destruction of the feudal system, the introduction of paid Governors and Judges..."—"...if, as I hope, Kasai become master of Abyssinia, further reforms may be expected ..."[5] Tēwodros' earliest chronicler, Debtera Zeneb, expressed the same hope by repeatedly stressing that it was God who had "raised up" Tēwodros to punish and to put an end to all the sin and evil practised in the country before.[6] But even at the moment when these hopes were about to materialize, when Kasa stood as victor, anointed and crowned King of Kings of Ethiopia with the challenging throne-name of Tēwodros, Plowden sounded a warning by stating: "The King is capable of great things, good or evil."[7] Most of his contemporaries would agree that evil had come to dominate his later career, and Tēwodros himself admits his failure in this respect in the strange document he drew up just before he made his first attempt to commit suicide: "The people of my country … Out of what I have done of evil towards them may God bring good.''[8]

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[4] Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers* (*P.P.*), *Correspondence respecting Abyssinia, 1846—1868* (London, 1868), p. 97 ff., Plowden to Clarendon, 9 July 1854.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 94 f., 132, 133, Plowden to Clarendon, 10 July, 25 Sept. and 6 Nov. 1854.

[6] Zeneb, *Yetēwodros Tarik*, edited and published in Amharic by Enno Littmann with the title *The Chronicle of King Theodore* (Princeton, 1902), pp. 3, 5, 15. An Italian translation has been published by Martino Mario Moreno, *La cronaca di re Teodoro attribuita al dabtarā "Zaneb"*, *Rass. St. Etiop.*, II, (1942), pp. 143—180. Although his name is not mentioned in the manuscript, it is generally accepted by scholars that the author of this chronicle was Debtera Zeneb.

[7] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 143 f., Plowden to Clarendon, 7 Apr. 1855.

Why did the events of Tēwodros' reign take the course they did? What were the forces that worked on him? To what extent did he shape his own fate? These are the pertinent questions of Tēwodros' life history. But who was he in the first place? Where did he come from and how did he reach the position of King of Kings of Ethiopia?

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[8] Trevenen J. Holland and Henry Hozier, *Record of the Expedition to Abyssinia* (2 vols., London, 1870), II, p. 42, Tēwodros to Napier, 11 Apr. 1868. For the circumstances under which this letter was written, see J.M. Flad, *Zwölf Jahre in Abessinien* (2 vols., Leipzig, 1887; first edition 1868), II, p. 66 ff.

II

THE POLITICAL AND FAMILY BACKGROUND OF TEWODROS

Tēwodros, who until the time of his coronation was called Kasa, was born about 1820 in north-western Ethiopia, either in or near the capital Gonder or in the province of Qwara between Lake Ṭana and the Sudan border.[1] His father Haylu Welde Gīyorgīs was the chief or governor of Qwara. By some foreign writers he has been given the title *Dejazmach*, but when his countrymen want to extol him he is called *Mesfine Qwara*.[2] Neither the contemporary chronicles nor the accounts of European visitors to Gonder in the eighteen-thirties, however, mention his name, which indicates that he either stayed out of the central political struggles, or died young, or probably both. Tēwodros' mother was a lady called Attiṭegeb, from the district of Infraz south-east of Gonder.[3] After Tēwodros had risen to the position of Emperor it was asserted that both his father and mother were of royal birth.[4] All Ethiopian sources are, however, silent on the matter except the writings of Abba Tekle Haymanot and the chronicle published by Fusella, which state in guarded language that his mother was said to be of royal descent.[5]

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[1] Luigi Fusella, ed., *Yaṭē Tēwodros Tarīk* (Rome, 1959), p. 1. This has also been published with Italian translation, *La cronaca dell'Imperatore Teodoro II di Etiopia in un manoscritto amarico, Ann. Ist. Univ. Or. di Napoli*, n.s., VI—VIII, (1957—1959). The name of the author of this history of Tēwodros is unknown, and it is a fairly late work, certainly later than 1889. Professor Fusella believes it to be the work of an eyewitness which is quite probable. Neither Zeneb's chronicle, written during Tēwodros' lifetime, nor Welde Maryam's, written in 1880/81 and published by C. Mondon-Vidailhet, *Chronique de Théodros II, roi des rois d'Éthiopie* (Paris, no date), have anything to say about the date and place of Tēwodros' birth. (Note that my references to these sources refer to the printed Amharic texts.) There is oral tradition to support both Gonder and Qwara as the birth place of Tēwodros. See also Theodor von Heuglin, *Reisen in Nord-Ost-Afrika* (Gotha, 1857), p. 40 f.; J. Lewis Krapf, *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours* (London, 1860), p. 457; Henry A. Stern, *Wanderings among the Falashas in Abyssinia* (London, 1862), p. 63; Guillaume Lejean, *Théodore II, le nouvel empire d'Abyssinie* (Paris, 1865), p.19.

[2] Fusella, *op. cit.*, p. 1; Stern, *op. cit.*, p. 63. The difference between Welde Gīyorgīs Haylu and Haylu Welde Gīyorgīs is simply a question of whether the father's name is placed before or after the son's; the former was (and still is) a common practice in the Gonder area. The hierarchy of rulers and governors in Ethiopia is *niguse negest* or *aṣē*—king of kings, em-

Because of the importance attached to ancestry in traditional Ethiopia—the illiterate child is supposed to memorize at least seven generations of his or her forefathers—it is possible to reconstruct some genealogies for Tēwodros on the basis of oral tradition and records kept in village churches for purposes of establishing landownership. None of these genealogies, however, bring Tēwodros within range of a ruling monarch for seven generations backward. The most important one, which traces Tēwodros' descent on the male line exclusively, makes a connection with Emperor Seyfe Ar'id in the middle of the fourteenth century, but then it offers only four generations for about 300 years. Some of the others, which make connections with the great kings of Gonder, Fasīledes (1632 - 1667) and even Īyasu I (1682 - 1706), contain other highly improbable elements, *e.g.*, seven generations within the time-span of one century.

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peror, *nigus*—king, *ras*—duke, *dejazmach*—governor and general, *fītawrarī*—commander of the vanguard, *qeñazmach* and *grazmach*—commanders of the right and left wings respectively, also used for governors. *Mesfin* and *shum* have no special place in the hierarchy and are probably best translated "prince, duke" and "chief" respectively.

[3] Fusella, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

[4] Stern, *op. cit.*, p. 63; Lejean, *op. cit.*, p. 19; Henry Dufton, *Narrative of a Journey through Abyssinia in 1862—3* (London, 1867), p. 112 ff.; Cf. Hormuzd Rassam, *Narrative of the British Mission to Theodore* (2 vols., London, 1869), I, p. 278 f.

[5] Fusella, *op. cit.*, p. 1; Carlo Conti Rossini, ed., *Vicende dell'Etiopia, e delle missioni cattoliche ai tempi di ras Ali, deggiac Ubié e re Teodoro secondo un documento abissino, Rend. della R. Acc. dei Lincei*, Ser.V, XXV, (1916), p. 522.

These errors do not, of course, invalidate the genealogies with regard to the generations closest to Tēwodros, where we find a number of men with the rank of *dejazmach* and an occasional *ras* or two, as well as, on Tēwodros' mother's side, a few priests and other churchmen of some importance. The genealogies also indicate that Tēwodros' paternal ancestors had lived in the western border province of Qwara and in the district of Çhilga for several generations, while his maternal ancestors had their homes mainly in the Infraz area east of Lake Ṭana.[6]

Whatever the truth may be about Tēwodros' eventual royal ancestry, this was not an important element in his political platform, and it played no rôle whatsoever in his rise to power. Nor was it, in fact, as the son of Haylu of Qwara and Attiṭegeb that he emerged to make his astounding career. Almost all sources agree that he grew up in the house of his relative Dejazmach Kinfu, and it was in the conflicts and wars which followed Kinfu's death that Tēwodros emerged as one of the main contenders for Kinfu's governorship.

The first half of the nineteenth century was certainly not a period in Ethiopian history when all governorships were constitutionally granted and loyally held. It was the period of feudalism *par excellence*, known traditionally as *Zemene Mesafint*, "the age of the princes (or judges)". Although the decay of the monarchy and the disintegration of the state started gradually, the year 1769 can be regarded as the opening year of the *Zemene Mesafint*, for that was the year when Ras Mīka'ēl Sihul of Tigrē acted as king-maker at Gonder and "in less than six months became the deliberate murderer of two kings".[7]

The province of Bēgēmdir, situated to the east of Lake Ṭana and therefore closest to the capital, was at the time regarded as the most important. Its governor received the title *Ras*

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[6] For the genealogical material on Tēwodros, I am indebted to His Excellency Dejazmach Kasa Meshesha, Governor of Gonder and himself a grandson of Tēwodros.

[7] James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile* (5 vols., London, 1790), II, p. 706 ff.

Bītweded, "the favourite duke", and was supposed to be the right hand of the monarch. But gradually the control of this province fell into the hands of Galla chiefs, and towards the end of the eighteenth century a family of Muslim Yeju Gallas established themselves as hereditary rulers there. The Amhara and Tigrean aristocracy were not prepared to accept this without resistance, and a series of political intrigues and petty wars broke out. Provincial governors or chiefs made themselves more and more independent of the capital at the same time as they participated in the enthroning and dethroning of kings, in accordance with the political fortunes of the day.

The last King of Kings to exercise any authority whatsoever of his own was Tekle Gīyorgīs Fiqr Seged, and it was his fate to be enthroned and dethroned six times over the years 1779 to 1800 and then to live in exile in Waldibba and Tigrē until his death in 1818.[8] It is not without justification that he has in Ethiopian tradition received the nickname *Fiṣamē Mengist*, "the end of the government". In theory the King still had the power of conferring fiefs and withdrawing them at his own pleasure; in fact, however, he was but a puppet in the hands of the chiefs. He had no army of his own and almost no revenue. The only regular income of Emperor Sahle Dingil in the eighteen-thirties was said to have been 300 thalers annually from the Muslim merchants of Gonder, and when he was impeached by some priests after four months' reign he was removed by the *Ras*.[9]

Nevertheless a new Emperor was always enthroned, and although there were often several Emperors living at the same time, it was the one who lived in the crumbling castles at Gonder who was regarded as the symbol of the Ethiopian state. For this he needed only one qualification which was, however, indispensable: he had to be a member of the male line of the Imperial Family, which traced

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[8] H. Weld Blundell, ed., *The Royal Chronicle of Abyssinia 1769—1840* (Cambridge, 1922), p. 230 ff. The dates given by Weld Blundell include only the Emperor's three first reigns. Cf. Eduard Rüppell, *Reise in Abessinien* (2 vols., Frankfurt am Main, 1838, 1840), II, p. 369 ff., and Arnauld d'Abbadie, *Douze ans dans la Haute-Éthiopie* (Paris, 1868), p. 140 ff.

[9] Rüppell, *op. cit.*, II, p. 173 ff.

its descent from Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. But with deposed Emperors living in various parts of the country, even the symbolic link of unity of the Emperor's person was bound eventually to break. Moreover, parallel with the breakdown of Imperial authority, a growing disintegration of church unity took place. Various factions of the Ethiopian Church, created on the basis of doctrinal differences arising from attempts to explain the nature of Christ, fought each other by both spiritual and temporal means and tended to seek the support of various regional rulers or political factions, thus aggravating the disunity of the Christian sections of the people.[10]

The main political divisions of the country were Tigrē in the north, Wag-Lasta, Simēn, Bēgēmdir, Gojam, and a number of smaller provinces in the centre, and Shewa in the south. Of these Shewa lived its own life under a fairly stable government, seldom interfered with the power struggles in the centre, and paid only a nominal allegiance to the Emperor at Gonder. Tigrē was also fairly autonomous, but less united than Shewa, and more apt to be dragged into political conflict. Through a number of successful campaigns and marriage alliances Ras Gugsa of Bēgēmdir maintained his supremacy in the central parts of the Empire until his death in June 1825. By that time the main co-actors on the political scene were Dejazmach Hayle Maryam of Simēn, Dejazmach Goshu of Gojam and Dejazmach Maru of Dembiya. Gugsa's death became the signal for renewed power struggles. First Hayle Maryam allied himself with Maru against Goshu. Then Maru joined Gugsa's son and successor Ras Yimam against Hayle Maryam, who was defeated in a battle outside Gonder in 1826 and died soon after. Hayle Maryam's son Wibē was captured but released on Maru's request and took over as *Dejazmach* of Simēn. Some of his father's territory was, however, taken by Maru. Finally Yimam joined hands with Wibē, mobilized a number of his other vassals and marched against Maru and Goshu. In October 1827 the armies met at Koso Ber in Amedamīt in Gojam. Maru and Goshu were defeated. The latter escaped, but Maru was killed by Wag-shum Kinfu or a soldier under his command.[11]

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[10] See for the religious conflicts in particular Weld Blundell, *op. cit.*, Appendix H, p. 521 ff., and for *Zemene Mesafint* in general this chronicle and Carlo Conti Rossini, ed., *La cronaca reale Abissina dall'anno 1800 all'anno 1840*, *Rend. della R. Acc. dei Lincei*, Ser. V, XXV, (1916), pp. 779—923 and *Nuovi documenti per la storia d'Abissinia nel secolo XIX*, *Rend. dell' Acc. Naz. dei Lincei*, Ser. VIII, II, (1947), pp. 357—416, as well as such travellers' accounts as Samuel Gobat, *Journal of a Three Years' Residence in Abyssinia* (London, 1834), Rüppell, *op. cit.*, and d'Abbadie, *op.cit.*

The career of Dejazmach Maru and his relationships are of importance to the history of Tēwodros, since it was to the household or extended family of Maru and Kinfu that Tēwodros belonged. The first one of Maru's family to hold an important governorship seems to have been his uncle Qeñazmach Kebtē during the last two decades of the eighteenth century.[12] Oral tradition reports that Kebtē was first followed by his nephew Ashebir for three years, after which Maru took over. Maru made his home town Fenja in Dembiya one of the most important centres of political activity in the Ṭana region and the ruins of his fortified residence still exist. From Fenja Maru governed ever-increasing territories. Much of his activity was directed westwards, where he governed all the border provinces from Agewmidir in the south to Metemma in the north, and where he fought many successful campaigns against the tribes on the frontier. In the words of the chronicler:

> From the time when he began to rule until the time when he died there was no one who defeated him: wherever he went he was victorious; he accomplished many valiant deeds at all seasons, and every year, in the country of the Arabs, the Ginjar, the Takrurī and in the lands of all the unbelievers....[13]

But Maru also expanded his territory to the north and east so that it at times included the districts of Wegera and Belesa.[14] Thus he controlled all the approaches to the capital Gonder. How personal his governorship was is obvious from the fact that it had no common geographical name but became known and is still referred to as

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[11] *Cronaca reale*, p. 897 ff.; *Nuovi documenti*, p. 367 ff.

[12] *Royal Chronicle*, pp. 373 ff., 422, 456, 467.

[13] *Nuovi documenti*, p. 372.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 370.

Ye-Maru Qimis, "what Maru tasted", *i.e.*, the land from which Maru received tribute. Like other chiefs of the period Maru had attempted to strengthen his political position by marriage alliances. He had himself married a daughter of Ras Gugsa and had given his own daughter Ye-Werq Wiha to Dejazmach Wibē.[15] But it was not uncommon that family alliances and battles alternated in the power struggles of the *Zemene Mesafint* and so it happened that Maru died in a battle against his brother-in-law and son-in-law.

After Maru's death most of his governorship was given to Ras Yimam's brother Maryē.[16] But it did not take long for Maru's own relations to come forward and claim *Ye-Maru Qimis*. Dejazmach Welde Teklē claimed it for himself and his sister Welette Teklē for her son Kinfu. Their relationship to Maru is not quite clear. Welette Teklē is known variously as the sister, the daughter, and the niece of Maru. The latter seems to be the most likely and agrees moreover with local tradition at Fenja.[17] She must have been a remarkable woman. The European travellers Gobat and Rüppell, who met her in 1830 and 1832, call her "the first lady in Gondar" and "one of the most distinguished and influential persons of Abyssinia".[18] At the time of the battle of Koso Ber she was married to Dejazmach Andawa Lībo of the province of Amhara. He soon avenged Maru's death by making war on Wag-shum Kinfu, killing him, and releasing his wife's son Kinfu from the captivity in which he had been held since the battle.[19]

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[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 368, 371.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 372; *Cronaca reale*, p. 903.

[17] *Nuovi documenti*, p. 374, "sister"; *Cronaca reale*, p. 908, "daughter of the sister"; Gobat, *op. cit.*, pp. 119, 149, "sister"; Rüppell, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 89, 424, "daughter": "Gobat...sagt: Oizore Walda Teklit sey eine Schwester von Dedschadi Maru, welches ein Irrthum ist." So is no doubt the correction made by Rüppell. In an extended Ethiopian family both a sister and a niece might be called daughters of the head of the family if they are brought up in his house. The position of Welde Teklē in the sources is still more complicated. Gobat, *op. cit.*, p. 194, calls Welette Teklē's brother "Gajar Heilou". Rüppell refers to the same person as "Woldo Gabriel" in one place and "Woldo Tackelit" in another, *op. cit.*, II, p.100 and p. 424 respectively. On the other hand, d'Abbadie is consistent in calling him Welde Teklē, *op. cit.*, pp. 493 ff., 504, 513.

[18] Gobat, *op. cit.*, pp. 119, 149; Rüppell, *op. cit.*, II, p. 97 ff. Cf. d'Abbadie, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

Andawa was later killed when he rebelled against Maryē, who had succeeded his brother Yimam as *Ras*. This did not, however, seem to affect the relationship between Welette Teklē's son Kinfu and Maryē. Kinfu married a niece of Ras Maryē and accompanied the *Ras* on a campaign to Tigrē which was to have far-reaching consequences. In the battle near Debre Abbay in February 1831 Maryē fell, and Sebagadis, the last outstanding leader of the Tigreans during the *Zemene Mesafint*, was captured and executed. The most important consequence of the battle was that Wibē of Simēn, who fought on Maryē's side, took control of political affairs in Tigrē and finally made himself ruler of all northern Ethiopia as far as the Red Sea coast. Maryē was succeeded by his brother Ras Dorī, who on Wibē's advice imprisoned some of the other generals on the winning side, including Kinfu. If Wibē entertained hopes of a southward expansion they did not materialize. Dorī died in June 1831 after four months' rule. The chiefs and generals at Debre Tabor elected Dorī's 12-13 year old nephew Alī as their chief.[20] Alī's father Alula was dead and a council was appointed to guide Alī in state affairs. In fact it was his mother Menen who took the lead in the political matters of the following decade.[21] Kinfu was released and made *Dejazmach* of all Maru's lands.[22] He must also have been a fairly young man at that time. He held court together with his mother at Fenja except when he accompanied Ras Alī on various campaigns.[23] He became known as a great war-lord who defended the western borderlands of Ethiopia and defeated one of Muhammed Alī's Egyptian armies in a fierce battle at Wad Kaltabu, near

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[19] *Cronaca reale*, p. 908. There can be no doubt that the "daughter of the sister" referred to was Welette Teklē, who is known to have had a son called Andawa Haylu; see p. 913.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 909 ff. ; *Nuovi documenti*, p. 374 ff. ; Gobat, *op. cit.*, p. 286 ff.

[21] Rüppell, *op. cit.*, II, p. 172; d'Abbadie, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

[22] *Cronaca reale*, p. 911.

[23] Rüppell, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 131 f., 172. My assumption about Kinfu's age is based on Rüppell's estimation that Welette Teklē was 32 years old in 1832; see p. 100.

Rashid, in 1837.[24] One of Kinfu's brothers, in all probability Dejazmach Gebru, was active as the governor of Qwara as early as 1832.[25] They were obviously pretty reckless and ruthless men, at least if one is to believe the great spokesman for law and order of those days, Līq Aṣqu at Gonder.[26] The somewhat more sympathetic chronicler sums up Kinfu's rule as follows:

> ... he preserved the country in peace against oppressors and robbers. He cut off the hands and feet of brigands and thieves. So the country he ruled could rest quiet from the violences of the soldiery; rich and poor rejoiced in his rule. In his day was abundance, and famine ceased.

Nevertheless the same chronicler testifies:

> When he died none of his followers showed any grief, although they divided amongst them his riches. A few men bore his body and brought it to Fanjā and buried it.[27]

That there were many who wanted to inherit Kinfu's power and wealth is obvious from the events that followed his death in 1839. Kinfu's brothers Gebru and Andawa Haylu, sons of Welette Teklē, had both died before Kinfu himself.[28] His uncle Welde Teklē on the other hand had managed to stay alive, which is somewhat surprising in view of the treatment he had received. Already in 1830 Welette Teklē had declared him insane and chained him. From Gobat's account of how he cured Welde Teklē it is quite obvious that the insanity was political.[29] After several years' imprisonment Welde Teklē was released and served under Kinfu, but on his deathbed the latter gave orders that his uncle should be blinded so that he would not stand in the way of Kinfu's young sons Yilma and

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[24] *Cronaca reale*, p. 913; d'Abbadie, *op. cit.*, p. 44 f. See Richard Hill, *Egypt in the Sudan 1820—1881* (London, 1959), p. 33, for this event as recorded in Sudanese sources.

[25] Rüppell, *op. cit.*, II, p. 138; d'Abbadie, *op. cit.*, p. 177 f.

[26] d'Abbadie, *op. cit.*, p. 178 ff.; cf. Fusella, *op. cit.*, p. 1 f.

[27] *Cronaca reale*, p. 913 f., quoted in Weld Blundell's translation, *Royal Chronicle*, p. 490 f.

[28] *Cronaca reale*, p. 913.

[29] Gobat, *op. cit.*, pp. 149 ff., 154 f.

Mekwennin. The man charged with the operation, however, intentionally or unintentionally carried it out in such a way that Welde Teklē's eyes were only slightly damaged. *Ye-Maru Qimis* was thus claimed by Welde Teklē as well as by the two brothers in rivalry with each other.[30]

Towards the end of Kinfu's life, however, his relations with Ras Alī, who was partly under the influence of Muslim relatives, had become less cordial. The *Ras* in fact feared that a coalition of Kinfu, Goshu, and probably Wibē was being formed against him.[31] On Kinfu's death he conceived the idea of breaking up this Christian front by conferring the investiture of Maru's lands on Goshu's son Biru, in spite of the fact that he had already given some promises to Kinfu's sons.[32] As expected, the armies of Kinfu, including Welde Teklē's followers, closed their ranks, and Goshu, albeit unwillingly, resolved to support his own ambitious son. This led to the battle of Qwinzila or Chentī Ber in Alefa in October 1839. Kinfu's armies were defeated; Yilma and Mekwennin were captured, but Welde Teklē escaped and eluded all Biru's attempts to capture him.[33]

Biru did not enjoy his governorship very long. Within a few months he and his father found themselves at war with Alī, who gave all Maru's lands to his mother Menen. In this situation Biru released Kinfu's sons and went to Gojam. Welde Teklē made a last attempt to gain control and defeated Mekwennin Kinfu, but when Menen arrived in Dembiya, he was himself defeated and captured. Menen had married a son of Aṣē Tekle Gīyorgīs, and so her triumphal entry into Gonder also meant a change of Emperor. Sahle Dingil was chased away from the throne for the third time, and Menen's husband Yohannis III became King of Kings in August 1840. Thus *Ye-Maru Qimis* became the fief of Menen, mother of

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[30] d'Abbadie, *op. cit.*, p. 494 f.

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 184 ff., 198 f., 219.

[32] *Ibid*, p. 406 ff.

[33] *Ibid.*, pp. 431 ff., 493, 504; *Cronaca reale*, p. 914; Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 6. The anonymous chronicler calls the sons Mekwennin and Gared. The latter was in fact the name of a third son of Kinfu, who played an important rôle later in Tēwodros' history.

the *Ras* and now also Empress or *Itēgē*.[34] Arnauld d'Abbadie, who had visited her the year before, summed up her character as follows: "Cupide, avare, astucieuse, violente, ambitieuse, despote, vaniteuse et coquette, elle passait pour ne reculer devant aucun moyen."[35] She would be the first one to stand in Tēwodros' way when, as Kasa, he seriously entered the struggle for power in his own right.

It would be an understatement to say that both political and family relationships left much to be desired in the Ethiopia of Kasa's youth, and his connections with Kinfu's house would have given him more than one glimpse of ruthless power struggle. But how exactly was he related to that house and how did he spend his early years?

Kasa is generally supposed to have been the nephew on his father's side of Dejazmach Kinfu. This was the view held by almost all the foreigners who wrote about their stay in Ethiopia after Kasa had become Emperor, except the British envoy Rassam who made a point of correcting "this extraordinary mistake" by referring to the assertion of the Emperor himself "... that Dajjâj Kânfu was his father, from whom he inherited the sovereignity of the Amhâra country". Rassam maintains that he made "very particular inquiries on this subject" and that people "unanimously declared that Theodore was the son of Dajjâj Kânfu; 'if he is not his son', said some of them, laughingly, 'whose son, then, is he?' "[36] As for the Ethiopian chroniclers, Zeneb does not define the relationship, while Welde Maryam calls Kasa the brother's son of Kinfu, and the still later anonymous chronicler makes him both the nephew, and the brother of Kinfu.[37] Once Kasa had risen to supreme power it is obvious that people who did not really know found it necessary to define his relationship to Kinfu. The answers given to Rassam are clearly the result of either ignorance or an easily understandable desire not to be caught making the relationship too remote, since it "legalized" Kasa's rise to power, at least in "the Amhâra country". It is significant that Tēwodros was never, as far as we know, called Kasa Kinfu, nor is he in fact generally known by the name of Kasa Haylu. Moreover, the sources are conspicuously silent about Kinfu's father. Only once does he appear for a moment in the chronicles of the eighteen-forties, and then it is to define better "a rebel called Lij Kasa, son of the father of Dejazmach Kinfu".[38] In fact, Kinfu was the elder brother of Kasa, and both were sons of the elusive Haylu of Qwara.[39] But their mothers were different: Kinfu's was the famous and influential Welette Teklē; Kasa's has become known in history as "the *koso*-vendor".[40]

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[34] *Cronaca reale*, p. 915; d'Abbadie, *op. cit.*, pp. 535, 159.

[35] d'Abbadie, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

[36] Stern, *op. cit.*, p. 63; Lejean, *op. cit.*, p. 19; Flad, *op. cit.*, I, p. 49; Rassam, *op. cit.*, I, p. 279; cf. Krapf, *op. cit.*, p. 458, where Kasa's father is simply called a "kinsman of Dejaj Comfu".

[37] Welde Maryam, *Tēwodros*, p. 1; Fusella, *op. cit.*, p. 1 f.; on p. 19 "father" is also used for Kinfu but with a clear indication that the sense is "foster-father".

Much less is of course known about Kasa's family background in a strict sense than about the general political background. The story of his birth as told to-day by an illiterate peasant in Dembiya runs in summary as follows:

> Weyzero Welette Teklē was the daughter of Dejazmach Maru's sister Alṭash. Her father was called Haylu Niblu. She first married Haylu Welde Gīyorgīs and gave birth to Kinfu. Later Maru, who was rising in power, decided that Haylu was too simple a husband for Welette Teklē. One day a great man from Bēgēmdir called Dejazmach Andawa passed Fenja on his way to the mineral springs at Mewat Alefa. Andawa saw the boy Kinfu and his mother, and it was soon agreed between Maru and his guest that he could come back for Welette Teklē. In the meantime Haylu and Welette Teklē lived together in happy ignorance of Maru's plans. Some time later Andawa returned and Welette Teklē was forced, much against her own will, to marry him. Haylu was ordered to escort the new couple, and it was only when they reached the river Arno-Garno in Miṭriha that Andawa found out who Haylu was and allowed him to return. On his way back Haylu met with a lady and her retinue coming from Gonder. Inquiries revealed that she was Weyzero Attiṭegeb who, having been divorced by her husband, was returning to her father's house. Haylu offered to escort her and then to marry her. They lived in Miṭriha and at Inqoqo Wiha. Kasa was conceived and born there and was baptized in Gonder Abba Abīye-Igzī'i Church.

Whether the details of this rather dramatic version are correct or not, it is a fact that it agrees with several important facts and conclusions drawn from the written sources. Haylu of Qwara became

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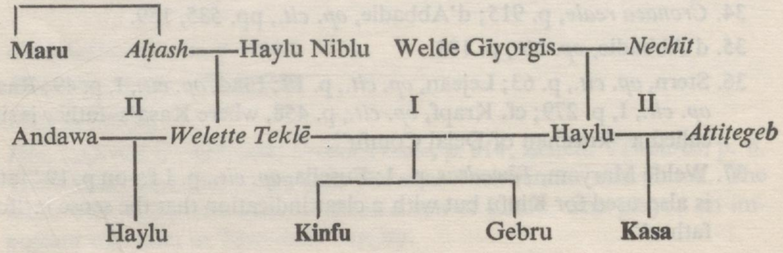
[38] *Nuovi documenti*, p. 388 f. This is part of the d'Abbadie MS 167, covering August 1840 to February 1848. *Lij* means "child, son, young man". Used as a title it indicates noble birth.

[39] Heuglin, *op. cit.*, p. 44 f.; *Vicende dell'Etiopia*, p. 519. The last scholars to discuss this relationship are to my knowledge Professor Fusella in the Italian translation of the anonymous *Tēwodros* chronicle, *La cronaca dell'Imperatore Teodoro II di Etiopia*, p. 65, n. 1, and Professor Joseph Tubiana in "Théodore II d'Éthiopie, Yä-mäysa ləğ", *Rass. St. Etiop*. XIX, (1963), pp. 155—163. Fusella in addition to the Ethiopian sources refers to a statement by Giuseppe Sapeto, *Etiopia* (Rome, 1890), p. 300, that "Hanfu" (obviously Kinfu) and Gebru were the brothers of Tēwodros, but nevertheless decides in favour of the uncle-nephew relationship. In his filological study of *Ye-meysa lij*, Professor Tubiana more or less takes for granted that this generally accepted relationship is correct. But it is mainly the earlier sources, Sapeto, Heuglin and the author of d'Abbadie MS 167, that call Kasa and Kinfu brothers. This and Heuglin's way of introducing Kiṇfu as the "elder brother" of Kasa, which makes it less likely that "brother" is used in a figurative sense, have made me accept this relationship as the most probable. The relationship after the addition from local tradition of Welette Teklē's father and Haylu's mother would thus be:



Haylu Welde Gīyorgīs had other wives besides Welette Teklē and Attiṭegeb and there were several more children, but these are the ones we meet with in the written sources.

[40] *Koso* is the name of a tree, the flowers of which provide a purgative used in Ethiopia against tapeworm.

related to Dejazmach Maru through marriage with Welette Teklē. He fathered one, or probably two sons, Kinfu and Gebru. This must have been between 1800 and 1810 since Gebru was about 28 in 1838 and Kinfu had an 18-year-old son in 1839.[41] Then Haylu was rejected as an "in-law" for some reason. The son or sons stayed with their mother, who married Dejazmach Andawa. Whether the divorce was due to political reasons as narrated above or was actually the result of prior disagreements, it seems to have led to a complete break. The anonymous chronicler has even preserved a tradition that Haylu for some time sought refuge in a convent in Gonder due to his enmity with Maru, and that it was only after this period that he married Attiṭegeb, also in Gonder.[42] Kasa was born about 1820 and was his mother's only child, or at least her only son.[43] Haylu immediately disappears out of the picture. In all probability he returned to Qwara and governed there for some time with or without Maru's approval, but how long he lived and whether he ever took Attiṭegeb with him to Qwara or not seems to be unknown.[44]

In any case, Attiṭegeb brought up her son alone in Gonder. Before 1827 he had begun school in the convent of Tekle Haymanot at Chenker between Gonder and Lake Ṭana. In the civil war that led ultimately to the battle of Koso Ber, the convent was sacked by Ras Yimam's troops. Many of Kasa's schoolmates were killed

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[41] d'Abbadie, *op. cit.*, pp. 178, 403.

[42] Fusella, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

[43] *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 32, 41. The phrase used here *and ye-nnatu* means "the only one of the mother". This should normally mean the only child, but could also be interpreted as the only son. The two sisters whose story is told in the same source, p. 18 f., and who are known in oral tradition as well, were most likely only Kasa's half-sisters, the daughters of Haylu with some other wife in Qwara. Note that the events took place when Kasa was a young *shifta* in Qwara. Local traditions speak of many half-brothers and half-sisters of Kasa on his father's side, but with the exception of Kinfu they seem to have played as little rôle in Kasa's life as his father did.

[44] The border warfare which Heuglin, *op. cit.*, p. 44 f., speaks of could have taken place earlier. Foreign sources from Tēwodros' reign state that Haylu died when Kasa was a boy; see Stern, *op. cit.*, p. 63; Dufton, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

or emasculated, but Kasa escaped the fate of the others.[45] Instead of returning to his mother he sought refuge with Maru's people. After Koso Ber he seems to have gone to Qwara probably with some of the remains of Maru's armies. Soon after he emerged as the leader of an army there or rather as the one in whose name a new force could be built up, for he was himself only some ten years old. Although he was in fact no kinsman of Maru at all, he was now called Kasa Maru which probably indicates what aspirations his followers entertained on his behalf. But when Kinfu had been released from captivity by his step-father Andawa, he marched to Qwara and took over the governorship.[46]

Kasa now became the foster-son of his half-brother Kinfu. For some time he continued his formal education, reportedly in the convent of Mahbere Sillasē in Qwara.[47] He learned how to read and write and became familiar with the Holy Scriptures and the history, law, and traditions of his country as preserved in the chronicles and other literature of Ethiopia. In all probability he received as much book-learning as could be provided for a young man around Gonder in those days. Many visitors commented on his knowledge of the Bible,[48] and he certainly knew how to carry on a debate with the clergy of his own country.[49] He is reported to have had a good understanding of the Arabic language,[50] and later in life he also acquired considerable knowledge of both ancient and modern European history and government and of the international relations of his time, not to speak of "his acquaintance with Shakespeare" by which, in Dufton's words, "he might put some of our countrymen to shame".[51]

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[45] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 5; *Nuovi documenti*, p. 371. Almost all the foreign sources, *e.g.*, Stern, Lejean, Dufton, who are in any case strongly dependent on each other in some parts, make Maru the one who attacked the convent, probably because he was the rebel in this war.

[46] *Nuovi documenti*, p. 374. I have followed Conti Rossini in assuming that this Kasa Maru is Kasa Haylu. The identification is not absolutely certain, since Maru might have had some son or other relative named Kasa. This is, however, not likely since no other sources speak of any Kasa in relation to Maru.

[47] Oral tradition asserts that he studied for seven years in this convent and left it at the age of sixteen. The close connections between Tēwodros and Mahbere Sillasē are obvious from the fact that his son Meshesha some years after the Emperor's death arranged for his remains to be carried from Meqdela and interred in this convent.

[48] Stern, *op. cit.*, p. 60; Dufton, *op. cit.*, p. 115 f.; Flad, *op. cit.*, I, p. 28.

[49] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 27 f.

The second element in his education, the training in the military skills and small-scale warfare of the time, was obtained through participation in his brother's campaigns. Many of the foreigners who saw Kasa testify to his unmatched skill as a marksman and a horseman and comment on his physical strength and endurance. Some also stress his apparent "enthusiastic love of war, and ... passionate ambition for daring and dangerous exploits".[52]

Kasa's position at Kinfu's court and in his camp is not easy to define, nor is it possible to say anything for certain about the personal relations between these two half-brothers. Kasa was at the same time a "son" and client of Kinfu and a potential rival, if not of Kinfu himself so at least of his sons. An echo of Kinfu's apprehensions is preserved in the story of how he sent messengers to the monks of Mahbere Sillasē to ask them to pray for him that his sons might succeed him, but was told that none of them would do so. The position would go to Kasa instead.[53] According to one tradition, Kasa even fled from Kinfu's house and took service with Dejazmach Goshu in Gojam. After Kinfu's death, however, we find him fighting on Yilma's and Mekwennin's side against Goshu and Biru at Chentī Ber.[54] The defeat of Kinfu's sons closed one chapter

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[50] Rassam, *op. cit.*, I, p. 270. See also Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 9, about Kasa's knowledge of Arabic already as a young man.

[51] Dufton, *op. cit*, p. 151; Heuglin, *op. cit.*, p. 43 f.; Rassam, *op. cit.*, I, p. 294 f.; Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris, (A.E.), Mémoires et documents, Afrique 61, fol. 130 ff., Lejean to Drouyn de Lhuys, 28 Jan. 1863.

[52] Stern, *op. cit.*, p, 63. See also Lejean, *op. cit.*, p. 201 f.; Dufton, *op. cit.*, p. 121; Henry Blanc, *A Narrative of Captivity in Abyssinia* (London, 1868), p. 10; Clements R. Markham, *A History of the Abyssinian Expedition* (London, 1869), p. 65.

[53] Welde Maryam, *Tēwodros*, p. 1.

[54] Fusella, *op. cit.*, p. 2 f.; Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 6.

in the history of the Ṭana region, the chapter which had been so largely dominated by the Fenja family, by Maru and Kinfu.

At twenty Kasa's political assets were almost nil. To a certain extent he had identified himself with Fenja. At an early age he had used Maru as surname, and later he would be found swearing "by the death of Kinfu", a sure sign that he looked up to Kinfu either as his father or as an outstanding chief.[55] Some traits in Kasa's character—bravery almost to the point of recklessness, a kind of fatalism and a certain disregard of human life—can probably be traced back to the way of life of Kinfu's camp, but this was personal. There was no political inheritance from Fenja. Still less was there any from Gonder or Infraz. Kasa's mother was still alive. How she had fared during the years since young Kasa had left her is not known, but some time in the eighteen-forties she must have met with much adversity,[56] and once her son began to defy the authority of the rulers and rise to power in his own right, her poverty and her merchandise *koso* were used as a means of reviling her son. There are so many *koso*-stories told about Tēwodros that it is hardly possible to dismiss them all as nothing but slander.[57] And as for poverty as such Tēwodros did not deny that he had been poor himself. On the contrary, he often stressed that he had tasted adversity and that he gave freely to the poor for that very reason.[58] But he always remained very sensitive about his mother and at the same time showed his affection and his desire to keep her memory alive by using "his mother's only child (or son)" as one of his appellations when carrying out the ceremonial bragging called *fukkera*.[59] Weyzero Attiṭegeb undoubtedly had much to do with the kind of man Kasa became, but it was certainly not through any backing from her or her relatives that he began to rise politically.

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[55] Fusella, *op. cit*, p. 19. Also Tēwodros' *nom de guerre* — *Ye-meysa lij* — is in this passage related to Kinfu, and correctly so, for when I collected oral tradition about Kinfu in the countryside of Dembiya, I was told that the name of his war-horse was *Meysa*. This seems to corroborate Professor Fusella's conclusion that *Meysa* was used as a nickname for Kinfu but to challenge in part Professor Tubiana's theses in "Yä-Mäysa ləğ"; cf. *La cronaca*, p. 71, n. 1, and "Yä-Mäysa ləğ", particularly p. 158 f. Tēwodros' own war-horse was called *Taṭeq*, and the King was therefore also known as *Abba Taṭeq*; see Welde Maryam, *Tēwodros*, p. 2.

[56] Antoine d'Abbadie, "Abyssinia and King Theodore", *The Catholic World*, VII (1868), p. 273.

[57] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 12. This is probably the source of the "*koso*-vendor" tradition. It should be noted that Zeneb does not counter the abuse of Tēwodros as "the son of the *koso*-vendor" but has Tēwodros get the better of his enemy Wend Yirad by means of *koso*. The earliest European writer to speak of Tēwodros' mother as a *koso*-vendor was probably Antoine d'Abbadie in the passage referred to above. Others followed in his steps: Krapf, *op. cit.*, p. 458; Stern, *op. cit.*, p. 63. Another anecdote in which *koso* plays a rôle is found in Welde Maryam, *Tēwodros*, p. 2, and Fusella, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

There remains the Qwara element. In spite of the seemingly complete absence of personal relations between Kasa and his father—and the Qwara branch of his father's family—it was to this province that Kasa resorted for assistance time and again during his early career. Unlike Kinfu, who had natural claims to all of *Ye-Maru Qimis*, Kasa could claim no other political inheritance than that of chief or governor of Qwara. But there at least his claims would be as good as those of Kinfu or of Kinfu's sons. Qwara was by no means an unimportant governorship. In the eighteenth century it had been the basis of one of the strongest power groups of the whole Gonderine period, the one created by Empress Mintiwwab and her family or clan. About 1770 James Bruce could describe its governor as follows:

> The governor of Kuara is one of the great officers of state, and, being the king's lieutenant-general, has absolute power in his

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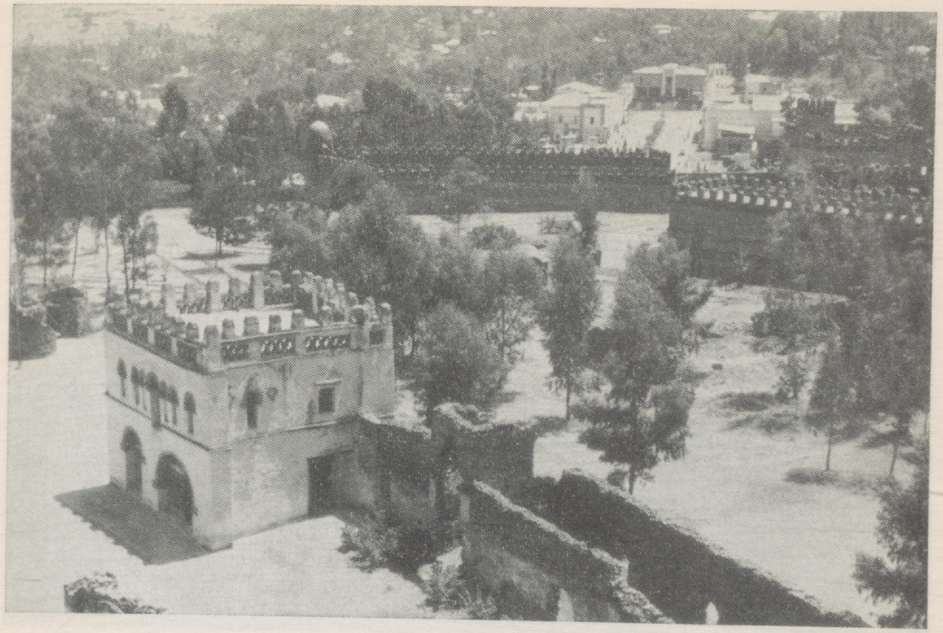
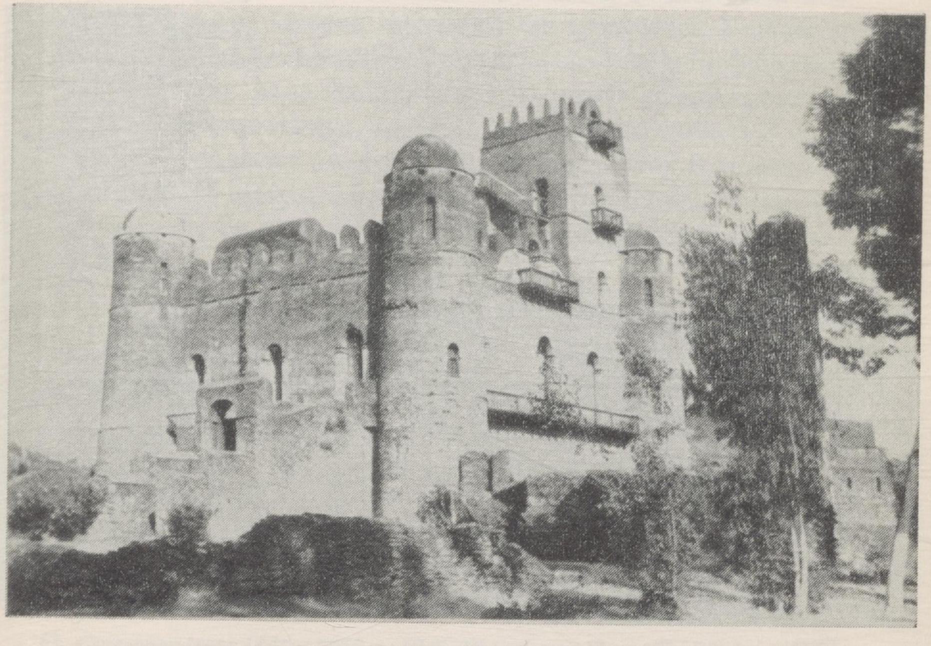
[58] Krapf, *op. cit.*, p. 458; Dufton, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

[59] See p. 28, n. 43. The memory of this relationship has been preserved by Ethiopian poets:

ሺህ ፡ ፈረስ ፡ በግራው ፡ ሺህ ፡ ፈረስ ፡ በቀኙ ፤
ሺህ ፡ ነፍጥ ፡ በኋላው ፡ ሺህ ፡ ነፍጥ ፡ በፊቱ ፤
ይህን ፡ ሳታይ ፡ ሞተች ፡ ኮሶ ፡ ሻጪ ፡ እናቱ ።
ይኸንን ፡ ሲሰማ ፡ ያጐራል ፡ ላመሉ ፤
ማንናትም ፡ ቢላችሁ ፡ ምንትዋብ ፡ ናት ፡ በሉ ።
A thousand horses on his left, a thousand on his right,
Thousand rifles behind and thousand in front;
His mother the *koso*-vendor died without seeing this.
If he hears this mentioned he will roar like a lion;
If he asks about his mother say she was Mintiwwab.

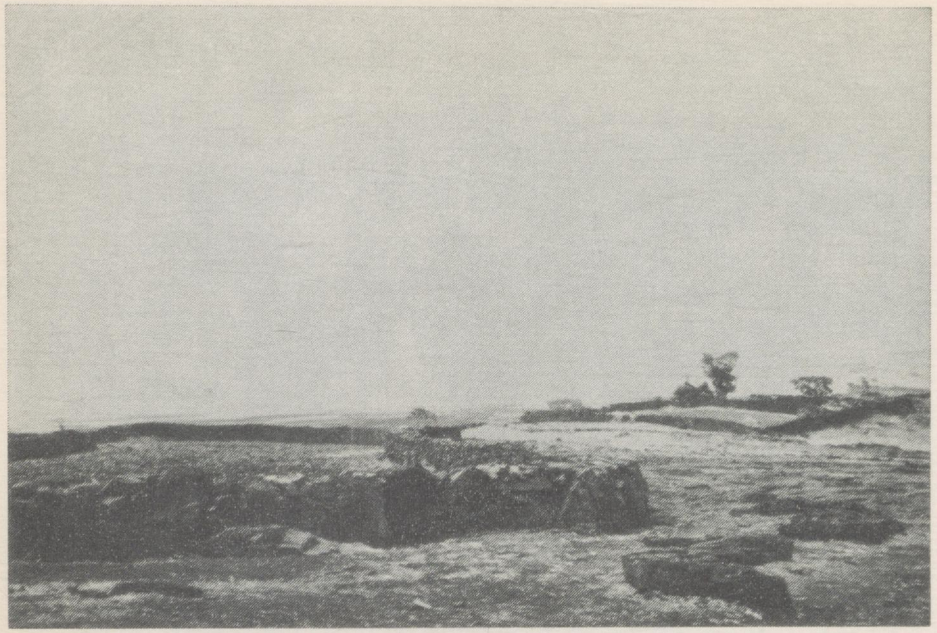
Alemayehu Moges, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

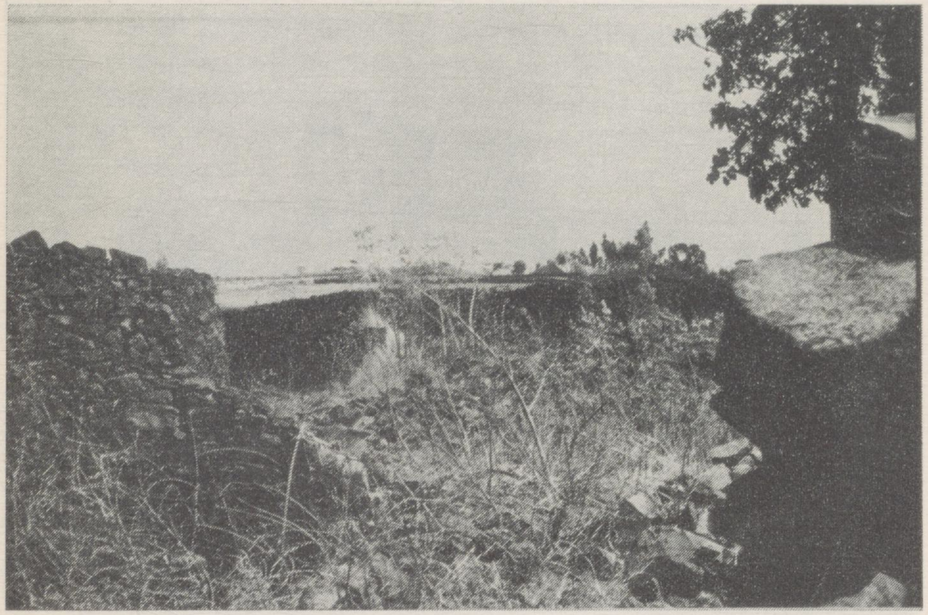




THE CASTLES OF GONDER

Photo by the author





THE RUINS AT FENJA

Photo by the author

> province, and carries *sendick* and *nagareet.* His kettle-drums are silver, and his privilege is to beat these drums even in marching through the capital, which no governor of a province is permitted to do ... but the governor of Kuara is intitled to continue beating his drums till he comes to the foot of the outer stair of the king's palace. This privilege ... was conferred upon the post by David II...[60]

Although the great days of Qwara had passed, it is quite possible that Maru and Kinfu derived much of their authority from Qwara rather than from Dembiya. Even as late as 1852 when Consul Plowden made an attempt to define the theoretical basis of the authority connected with various positions in Ethiopia, he wrote that Wibē had usurped the right of the *Ras* to hear appeals from his province and then grouped the "Chief of Kwora" with the "Chiefs of the Agows of Lasta called the 'Wagshoom'" as the only two governors who "although... subject to the *Ras*, claim also this privilege of final judgement".[61] On the other hand, Qwara was a border province, a hot lowland district of the type which Ethiopians of the highlands have traditionally regarded as hardly fit for human beings to live in. Kasa Qwareñña, as he would be called, was to suffer abuse as a *qwelleñña, ye-fiyyel ireñña*, "a lowlander, a goatherd".[62] But whatever the aspirations of Kasa were, it would be a natural first step to try to win the governorship of Qwara. This would not necessarily be an easy step, however, for although Kasa had some claims there, he was not the only one.

Kasa's background is an obscure and controversial issue. Too many questions are still left unanswered. But it seems safe to say that birth and family connections provided him with more expectations than the average boy around Gonder at the time. Of course this did not mean much in an age when close relatives of Emperors, even men who had themselves ruled, lived in poverty and despair. There

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60. Bruce, *op. cit.*, III, p. 260. The *sendeq*, banner, and the *negarit*, large drum, are two of the most important symbols of authority of traditional Ethiopia.

61. *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 67 ff., Plowden to Granville, 20 June 1852.

62. Fusella, *op. cit.*, p. 7; Welde Maryam, *Tēwodros*, p. 4.

was then a rapid turnover in the ruling military class, and competition was ruthless. If Kasa could expect some opportunities, he would have to fight to exploit them. On the other hand, the special circumstances of his boyhood when he was brought up in a household where he was the stepchild or "poor relative", probably kindled his ambitions and his dreams to be something more than anyone expected. Afterwards Plowden and others would report that:

> From his earliest youth Dejajmatch Kasai regarded his present elevation as assuredly destined but concealed his designs with prudence equal to his daring until ripe for execution.[63]

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[63] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 148 ff., Plowden to Clarendon, 25 June 1855.

III

KASA'S RISE TO POWER 1840—1855

The outcome of the battle of Chentī Ber forced Kasa to make a new start in life. After a short time in hiding in Alefa he went to Gojam and offered his services to Dejazmach Goshu.[1] Weyzero Menen had accepted the governorship of *Ye-Maru Qimis* and set about to subdue all opposition and appoint her own vassals. Biru Goshu formed an alliance with Wibē against Ras Alī, who had entered Gojam and was ruining the province with his army. Wibē brought his army to Bēgēmdir, Biru joined him, and in a battle in February 1842, the outcome of which was a puzzle even to the contemporaries, Alī was first defeated and Wibē then captured by one of Alī's generals, whereupon Biru decided to escape to his father in Gojam. With the assistance of the new bishop Abba Selama who had arrived the year before and had accompanied him to Debre Tabor, Wibē managed to negotiate his own release and even received help to recapture his province from his brother Merso who had in the meantime been appointed governor there. After this, relations between Wibē and Alī were tolerably good for about five years. But a personal hatred between Alī and Biru, attributed to the fact that Biru had taken Alī's wife, made reconciliation between these two chiefs impossible. As a consequence of this Alī invaded Gojam every year and devastated the province without ever being able to capture Biru. The governors appointed by Alī in Gojam were as regularly defeated by Biru and Goshu, and the repeated attempts of the latter to save the province by withdrawing from the conflict all failed, apparently because Biru was by now stronger than his father.[2]

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[1] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 6. The place is called Zirgī by Zeneb and Sarago by Stern, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

These developments did not suit Kasa, for they brought him no closer to a governorship of his own, whether Qwara, Dembiya or any other part of Kinfu's heritage. He therefore at one point or another left Gojam and went to Qwara. There he soon quarreled with Menen's governor Bītewa but escaped to the lowlands and became a *shifta*. Kasa's adventures as an outlaw on the western frontiers of Ethiopia became legendary during his lifetime. Zeneb, who was Tēwodros' secretary and "keeper of the royal archives",[3] has provided posterity with Kasa's first twelve followers, the seventy whom he tried to incorporate in his band but who conspired against him so that he had to defeat them with his twelve faithful, and finally the three hundred invincible who became the nucleus of his first army. Together with a Ginjar-Shanqilla companion called Idrīs, Kasa plundered caravans, sacked Shanqilla villages and collected booty of every kind: money, horses and mules, sheep, goats and cattle, grain and slaves, for himself and his men, "and the soldiers were very happy". But there was also plenty of hardship and at times almost starvation: "in the wilderness ... they ate the fruit and the wild honey of the trees".[4]

Even during his time as an outlaw Kasa thought along constructive lines. He shared out captured grain and money to the peasants in Qwara and told them to buy hoes and plant. "Lij Kasa began to clear the forest. Together with his soldiers he cultivated much [land] and sowed it." And Zeneb tells us that Kasa's example was followed by all the people.[5]

About 1845 or probably earlier Kasa had gathered so many devoted followers that Menen began to feel his presence in her governor-

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[2] *Nuovi documenti*, p. 380 ff.; *Vicende dell'Etiopia*, p. 462 ff.; Mansfield Parkyns, *Life in Abyssinia* (2 vols., London, 1853), II, p. 131 ff.; Walter Chichele Plowden, *Travels in Abyssinia and the Galla Country* (London, 1868), pp. 206 ff., 386 ff.

[3] Flad, *op. cit.*, I, p. 31; Welde Maryam, *Tēwodros*, p. 46; Rassam, *op. cit.*, II, p. 192.

[4] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 6 ff.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

ship embarrassing. He was told to "come in", that is, to declare his loyalty and be forgiven his misdeeds in the past. At first he refused but then he was offered Alī's daughter Tewabech as well as Qwara as his fief under Menen. The aim of this was of course to secure Kasa's support in the unceasing conflicts and wars that went on between Alī and his vassals. Kasa accepted and thus became related to both the *Ras* and the Empress.[6] But it seems as if his very advancement gave life to disparaging comments about him and his mother, and as far as power goes, the anonymous chronicle has preserved a tradition that Itēgē Menen decided to send a superior with Kasa to Qwara on the pretext that this was the province of a *dejazmach*, a rank not yet given to Kasa. Kasa was not the man to accept humiliation, and so the friendship was short-lived. He went to Qwara and soon raised the standard of rebellion against Menen and thereby indirectly against the *Ras*.[7]

In October 1846 Kasa invaded and pillaged Dembiya. Menen sent some troops to capture him but he defeated them twice at Çhaqo and at Seqela Werka, in Ṭaqusa, west of Lake Ṭana. These were only small encounters. According to Zeneb, Kasa entered the first with 400 spearmen and 22 riflemen but captured 100 rifles from his enemy. This is also the occasion when he is supposed to have captured Qeñazmach Wend Yirad, who had bragged that he would bring in the son of the *koso*-vendor, and forced him to empty a big horn of *koso* to the jeers of Kasa and his men.[8]

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[6] *Ibid.*, p. 11 f.; Fusella, *op. cit.*, p. 3. The latter actually speaks of a campaign by Alī against Kasa before the marriage, while Welde Maryam on the other hand does not mention Kasa's life as a *shifta* before the marriage at all. It is very difficult to reconstruct the order of these events with the present source material. The anonymous chronicler also makes Tewabech the sister of Alī, as does much of the oral tradition in Dembiya, while the truly contemporary author of d'Abbadie MS 167, *Nuovi documenti*, p. 389, says that Kasa married "someone who was said to be the daughter of her [Menen's] son Ras Alī". Heuglin, *op. cit.*, p. 45, also has Ras Alī as Kasa's father-in-law.

[7] Fusella, *op. cit.*, p. 3 f. Cf. Welde Maryam, *Tēwodros*, p. 2.

[8] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 12; *Nuovi documenti*, p. 388 f. While Welde Maryam's account of Kasa's rebellion and early victories is very brief, the anonymous chronicler has preserved a number of stories or traditions, but his

Alī was as usual occupied in raiding Gojam and trying to force Biru to surrender. But his relations with Wibē had also deteriorated, and an outbreak of hostilities was expected towards the end of 1846. Menen marched her army eastwards to support her son. Kasa now took the audacious step of occupying the capital itself in early January 1847 and demanded that the people pay him all the taxes and tribute due to Menen and Alī. Having received what he asked for and appointed his own men to administer matters in Gonder, Kasa proceeded to impose his rule on the districts also east and south of Lake Ṭana. Menen and Alī were in the meantime campaigning and pillaging in Wibē's province Wegera. Some of Wibē's officers were defeated but Wibē was careful not to leave the mountains of Simēn himself, and since Alī's cavalry were not suitable for going there, no decisive battle took place. In June Menen returned to Gonder with her army and immediately marched against Kasa. The armies met at Iloha or Qworeba at the northwest corner of Ṭana on June 18, 1847. The outcome caused some consternation; the Empress, mother of the *Ras*, was captured together with her husband Aṣē Yohannis. Alī sent the most important men in Gonder to negotiate the release of his mother. Kasa demanded all the lands that had belonged to Kinfu, in fact the governorship now held by Menen. Alī first refused, made peace with Wibē and marched to Gonder, where the people had to deliver grain a third time in six months. This time even the otherwise sacrosanct Içhegē Bēt was violated and sacked. But Menen sent word to her son: "If you do not get me out of this bad position peacefully you will not find me by fighting." So Alī accepted the terms; Menen was released after two or three months' imprisonment, and Kasa became the *Dejazmach* of *Ye-Maru Qimis* from Firqa Ber to the borders of Damot, and as far north as Armaçheho.[9]

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ignorance of the exact dates and locations of battles or encounters makes it impossible to reconstruct the course of events on the basis of his work. Manuscripts II to V in *Nuovi documenti*, written in all probability in Gonder in the very years of Kasa's rise to power, will therefore be used as the main source for this period of Tēwodros' life.

[9] *Nuovi documenti*, p. 389 ff.; Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 13; *Vicende dell'Etiopia*, p. 480 ff.

Kasa's victory over Menen swelled the ranks of his army. In the eyes of the pillaged peasantry the soldiers were in numbers "like the sand of the sea". For some reason or another Kasa nevertheless avoided battle with Goshu and Biru when they invaded his territory in the beginning of 1848. They went to Gonder, where Goshu called on the Emperor Sahle Dingil and was invested with the title and position of *Ras*. This was probably done at the instigation of Abune Selama, who had been exiled from Gonder by Itēgē Menen and the Içhegē Mahṣentu on Alī's orders two years earlier.[10] In any case Mahṣentu was chained and carried off to Gojam as "revenge for Abune Selama". But the elevation of Goshu to the rank of *ras* was mainly directed against Alī, and when Kasa approached the capital, Goshu and Biru decamped and returned to Gojam taking the road east of Lake Ṭana.[11] It is quite possible that Kasa had no objection to this additional complication in the relations between Alī and Goshu, which does not mean, however, that he acknowledged Goshu's rank himself.[12]

With his own matters settled and Alī occupied with revolts both in Lasta and Gojam, Kasa decided to make war on the Egyptian forces in the Sudan west of Metemma. In March 1848 he advanced as far as Dabarkī, less than 100 kms east of Sinnar, where his troops in an uncoordinated attack tried to capture a strong fenced in position defended by firearms, including two field guns. The first attackers were massacred and Kasa had to retreat. The chronicler explains the defeat in the following way:

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[10] *Abun* was the title of the bishop or metropolitan of Ethiopia. Before a name it takes the form *abune*. The *içhegē* was the head of all the monastic orders of Ethiopia and usually second in rank to the *abun*, who was in the past brought from the Coptic Church of Egypt.

[11] *Nuovi documenti*, p. 394 f. On the expulsion of the *Abun* from Gonder, see p. 385 ff. Cf. *Vicende dell'Etiopia*, p. 476 ff., which is a more detailed source of the ecclesiastical part of these conflicts with, however, a strong bias against Abune Selama and later against Tēwodros, quite natural in a work by the Catholic priest Abba Tekle Haymanot. According to this source the *Abun* had sent messages to many Ethiopian chiefs including Kasa to revolt against Alī. If this is true he would also have been behind the conflict between Alī and Wibē, with whom he found refuge but not all the support he wanted against the Catholics in Tigrē. See also Guglielmo Massaja, *I miei trentacinque anni di missione nell'alta Etiopia* (12 vols., Rome, 1921—30), I, p. 53.

[12] Zeneb uses *dejazmach* as the title for Goshu throughout his chronicle.

> But if the Turks had not made a fortress, they would have been lost because they would not have been able to stand fast in the presence of *Dejazmach* Kasa, as not long ago they had not been able to stand fast in front of *Dejazmach* Kinfu.[13]

Be that as it may, the battle of Dabarkī was one of the events in Kasa's life that influenced him most and shaped his thinking on both political and military matters.

Back in Alefa and Dembiya, Kasa experienced that his own subordinates were not above rebelling against him on an evil day. He captured the rebels and reportedly had their hands and feet cut off. Alī called Kasa to Debre Tabor; Kasa put it off until after the rains, then refused, because he did not trust that he would be safe from reprisals for his earlier treatment of Menen. Alī proclaimed war on his vassal and sent a big army into Dembiya, which was badly pillaged by both sides. Already during the rains Kasa's troops had caused so much destruction that the chronicler exclaims: "O, how thou hast changed, O Gonder, great royal city, laughing-stock of petty warriors." After four months' warfare a conciliation took place, and Alī could again turn his attention towards his enemy Biru in Gojam.[14]

The reconciliation of 1849 introduced a period of about three years of loyal service by Kasa to his overlord Alī . Late in 1849 we find Kasa campaigning in Gojam side by side with Alī and Goshu, who had abandoned the cause of his son and also reconciled himself with Alī. Whenever his services were not needed Alī sent Kasa to Agewmidir, which seems to have succeeded Qwara and Dembiya as Kasa's base in 1850 and 1851. Wibē kept his armies busy in Tigrē and on the coast, and so Gonder and the areas around Ṭana were given time to recover.[15]

At the beginning of 1852 relations between Kasa and the *Ras* deteriorated. Kasa refused to appear when Alī called him and Alī dispatched a large army to Agewmidir to catch his vassal. Kasa moved quickly northwards to a strong fortified position in the neighbourhood of Dengel Ber in Alefa. Alī's officers found the position too strong to attack, bypassed it and entered Dembiya which again throughout the rainy season of 1852 had to supply a large and rapacious army with all it wanted. Kasa withdrew once again to Qwara to strengthen his army for what turned out to be the struggle which would eventually give him supreme power in Ethiopia.[16]

Alī once again, as he had done when he wanted to get rid of Kinfu's sons, selected Goshu for the task of destroying his enemy. In September it was made publicly known at Gonder that Alī had given Kasa's lands to Goshu. And again Alī probably did not care whether his overt enemy or his ally would be destroyed. The *Ras* remained behind in Gojam still besieging Goshu's son in his *amba*, and those of Alī's troops that had stayed in Dembiya through the rainy season were ordered back to Bēgēmdir. in October Kasa arrived first in Alefa then in Çhilga. After one month of manœuvring, during which Goshu's soldiers always found Kasa in too strong positions, Kasa moved out onto the plains at Gur Amba. And now Goshu's men said: "Why in the world has he pitched his camp in this place, when he has so few soldiers, and how shall he stand against us?" But they had underestimated Kasa, and it was not numbers that decided the outcome of the battle on November 27, 1852. In a full day's combat with heavy casualties on both sides Kasa completely routed Goshu's army. Goshu died in the battle, and the remains of his army hurried back to Gojam.[17]

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[13] *Nuovi documenti*, p. 396; Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 13. Cf. Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 83. The foreign sources, Stern, Lejean and Dufton, report that Kasa was wounded in this battle. This and the story of the joint of meat sent by Menen to the convalescent instead of a fat cow are probably later inventions. Lejean and Dufton seem otherwise to have been well informed about the battle.

[14] *Nuovi documenti*, p. 396 f. Cf. Plowden, *op. cit.*, p. 396. Plowden travelled through Wegera to Debre Tabor in February 1849 before the conciliation. The account of these events given by Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 14, is difficult to bring into agreement with *Nuovi documenti*. According to Zeneb, Alī in April (1849?) sent a big army under the command of Biru Alīgaz and Dejazmach Belew against Kasa. Kasa had fortified himself at Sawdiba in Ṭaqusa but his position was betrayed by one of his men who had been captured. A battle took place, after which Kasa made peace and joined Alī in his campaign in Gojam. For two years following this Kasa remained obedient to the orders of the *Ras*. The first part of this story seems to fit in much better with the events of 1852 or 1853.

[15] *Nuovi documenti*, p. 398 ff.; Massaja, *op. cit.*, I, p. 106 f.

[16] *Nuovi documenti*, p. 401 ff.

It is worth noting that Kasa, even at this late moment, did not declare war on his superior Alī. On the contrary, he asked the clergy of Gonder to send a conciliatory mission on his behalf to Gojam, which they did. But Alī refused to make peace, and on receiving this information Kasa exchanged Alī's officials at Gonder for his own followers and concentrated his troops in one place. The *Ras* dispatched some of his generals to Bēgēmdir. On his request additional troops arrived from Wibē, and in March they invaded Dembiya. In the face of superior forces, Kasa, who still had no more than 800—1000 firearms in his whole army, withdrew to the border of Ṭaqusa, but there he accepted the challenge and on April 12 won a decisive victory over Alī's and Wibē's united forces. This was Kasa's second important victory, famous as the battle in which he fought four *dejazmaches* and killed two, Biru Alīgaz and Belew.[18]

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[17] *Ibid.*, p. 404 f.; Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 14, which now agrees again in essence with the main source. *Nuovi documenti* has the date Hidar 17 (Nov. 25) for the battle, but I have with some hesitation accepted Hidar 19 from Zeneb because Zeneb also states that it took place on the day of Saint Gabriel, which is the 19th of the Ethiopian month. I fail to understand the "corrections" of this and later battle dates made by Conti Rossini in the footnotes of *Vicende dell'Etiopia*, p. 505 ff. Welde Maryam, *Tēwodros*, p. 2 f., also has the main facts of this battle correct, while the anonymous chronicler, Fusella, *op. cit.*, p. 9, giving no date at all, places the battlefield in Gojam and states that Goshu was made a prisoner and later sent to Meqdela. The latter is obviously due to Goshu's being confused with his son Biru.

[18] *Nuovi documenti*, p. 406 f.; Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 14 f.; Welde Maryam, *Tēwodros*, p. 3. Cf. Fusella, *op. cit.*, p. 7, where this battle is placed before the capture of Itēgē Menen, *i.e.*, in 1847. See also Heuglin, *op. cit.*, pp. 98, 102 ff., 129. Heuglin confirms that Wibē's son Gwangwil but not Wibē himself took part in this campaign. Heuglin was present in Kasa's camp until one week before the battle and reports on Kasa's preparations

After this battle Kasa seems no longer to have hesitated about his goal: the overthrow of Ras Alī. In May he marched to Debre Tabor and burnt Alī's capital. Then he crossed into Gojam, where he met and defeated Alī's own army in another bloody battle at Ayshal on June 29. Alī saved his life by fleeing to Yeju. This was the end of the rule of Ethiopia by the Yeju Galla dynasty. In traditional Ethiopian history the battle of Ayshal is often regarded as the end of the *Zemene Mesafint* and the beginning of Tēwodros' reign. In the words of Zeneb:

> In the seventy-first year after the disappearance of the King God raised up King Tēwodros. It was then that the rule of the Gallas in Bēgēmdir, in Gojam, in Lasta, in Yeju and Wello came to an end.[19]

But before Kasa could claim that he was in fact the supreme ruler in central Ethiopia it remained for him to come to terms in some way or other with Biru, who had defied Alī's government for more than ten years, and Wibē, who had at least been at war with him twice in that time. Wibē had obviously not expected that Alī would be defeated and had most of his troops in Tigrē. When Kasa advanced on Wegera he therefore agreed to accept him as Ras Alī's successor and sent his son with tribute. This course of action was probably dictated mainly by a desire to gain time. In fact Wibē not only began to collect his forces but also approached Consul Plowden for arms.[20]

Kasa turned his attention to Biru, who escaped after a first encounter in March but was finally caught in May 1854 when his remaining followers refused to fight against Kasa. Biru's life was spared, but he remained a prisoner for fourteen years. His wife handed over his mountain fastness Jibela Amba with all its arms

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for the battle. See also *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 75, Plowden to Clarendon, 24 May 1853.

[19] *Nuovi documenti*, p. 407 f.; Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 15; Welde Maryam, *Tēwodros*, p 3 ff.

[20] *Nuovi documenti*, p. 408; *Correspondence 1846-1868*, pp. 79 ff., 92, Plowden to Clarendon, 15 Oct., 20 Oct., 21 Dec. 1853, 25 Jan., 28 Feb. and 29 June 1854.

and goods, reportedly on condition that she would not herself be handed over to her husband. After a short successful campaign against Farīs Alī of Lasta on the borders of Simēn, Kasa encamped for the rainy season at Amba C̣hera.[21]

As part of his earlier agreement with Wibē, Kasa had demanded that Abune Selama should be sent to Gonder, and during a visit to Gonder in August Kasa arranged a reconciliation between the *Abun* and the *Ic̣hegē* and other important clergy there. A proclamation was issued that all were to follow the faith and rule of the *Abun*. This was followed in September by a proclamation at Amba C̣hera in the presence of the *Abun* and the *Ic̣hegē* that Kasa was henceforth to be called *Nigus* or King and not *Dejazmach*. On the same occasion Kasa confirmed his marriage with Tewabech by partaking of the Holy Communion together with her.[22]

In October an attempt was made with the *Abun* and the *Ic̣hegē* as intermediaries to have Wibē accept the new developments. He was, according to Plowden, offered the title of *Ras* for acknowledging Kasa as *Aṣē*.[23] In view of Wibē's ambitions for more than a decade to do what Kasa was now doing, it is hardly surprising that he refused to become permanently a vassal of the latter. By January 1855 both Kasa and Wibē were ready for the final showdown. Kasa invaded Simēn, Wibē arrived from Tigrē, and on February 9 the battle took place near Deresgē. Wibē's forces were defeated, two of his sons fell in the battle, Wibē was himself captured and another son was soon after forced to hand over Wibē's mountain fortress with all his stored wealth. This victory crowned Kasa's rise to supreme power, and he lost no time in putting the seal on it. Two days

[21] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 16 f.; *Nuovi documenti*, p. 408.

[22] *Nuovi documenti*, p. 408 f.; *Vicende dell'Etiopia*, pp. 508 f., 513 f., 516 f.

[23] *Nuovi documenti*, p. 409 f.; *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 133 f., Plowden to Clarendon, 28 Nov. 1854. A completely different version of these negotiations is given by Charles T. Beke, *The British Captives in Abyssinia* (London, 1867), p. 38, but since I do not know Beke's source for his assertions, I have disregarded them.

after the battle he was anointed and crowned King of Kings by the *Abun* in Deresgē Maryam church. He chose as his throne name Tēwodros.[24]

[24] *Nouvi documenti*, p. 410; Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 18 f.; *Correspondence 1846—1868*, pp. 146, 148 ff., Plowden to Clarendon, 3 Mar. and 25 June 1855. Both Welde Maryam and the anonymous chronicler provide more detailed but less accurate accounts of these events than Zeneb. Welde Maryam's date for the battle is wrong by one month and the other chronicler gives the date of the battle for the coronation. They accuse Kasa of having tortured or threatened to kill Wibē in order to make Gwangwil surrender the mountain fortress with its wealth. See Welde Maryam, *Tēwodros*, p. 5 f. and Fusella, *op. cit.*, p. 11 f. Henry Stern, *The Captive Missionary* (London, 1869), p. 20 f., has a completely different story of the surrender of the *amba*, in which there is no mention of torture or threats. He asserts that he had the story from the two sons of Wibē who were his fellow-prisoners at Meqdela.

IV

KING TEWODROS — PERSONALITY AND POLITICS

In Tēwodros II, Ethiopia received a ruler of a kind very different from any that she had known for many years or even generations. In more than one sense of the word he was a revolutionary. In more than one field of the life of his nation he was an innovator of no mean proportions. The last of the *mesafint*, he was also the first in the line of Emperors to create modern Ethiopia. As every other person he was of course largely the product of the social, religious and political environment in which he had grown up. It was Kasa, the poor relative, the *shifta* and the rebel, who was figuratively speaking the father of Tēwodros. If one loses sight of Kasa, much in the short career of Tēwodros becomes incomprehensible.

All along, one of his problems was what one might call the problem of identification. Although he had fought to become the successor of Maru and had seemingly been satisfied for a few years with filling the rôle of a second Kinfu, he was forced both by circumstances and, as far as one can judge, inner motivation, to look for something more. All his narrow escapes, from that first one as a child in the convent of Chenker, and particularly the rapid succession of victories against all odds in the last two years, must have given Kasa a special sense of destiny. Now that he held supreme power in Ethiopia, he could not identify himself with those that he replaced.

In many ways Ras Alī was his immediate predecessor, and it was with Alī's daughter that he was to share the Throne. But with the political system of which Alī and his house had been the main representatives Kasa would have nothing to do. He wanted to be something more than a *major-domo* or a dictator. Still less could Kasa identify himself with the last holders of the Imperial throne at Gonder. It is completely irrelevant in this connection whether Tēwodros

was or was not a member of the Solomonian dynasty himself. The Solomonian dynasty at Gonder had become hopelessly identified with shadow kings, and least of all would Kasa be a puppet.

When Kasa proclaimed himself King at Amba Çhera in 1854 he may or may not have made his ultimate decision with regard to the Imperial throne. On the one hand, Sahle Sillasē of Shewa had started to use the title of King, although still nominally a vassal of the Emperor at Gonder. On the other hand, none of the great chiefs around Gonder had been known as kings. In the treaty of 1849 between "Great Britain and Abyssynia" Ras Alī signed himself "Alī, Nigus of Habisha [Abyssinia]", probably at the instigation of Consul Plowden, who had instructions to sign a treaty with the Emperor but under the circumstances nevertheless found it preferable to have Alī's name on it, since he could not have both.[1] In any case Alī did not take the risk of provoking the Church and the legitimists by calling himself a king in public.[2] When Kasa did so without the sanction of any Emperor it was no doubt a revolutionary action, which contrasts clearly with Dejazmach Goshu's visit to the Emperor only six years earlier to receive the title of *Ras*.

The irrevocable step was, however, the coronation in Deresgē Maryam church. By that ceremony Kasa declared himself the successor to the long line of Ethiopian monarchs, the Kings of the House of David and the line of Solomon. Kasa had seen to it that he had both the *Abun* and the *Ic̣hegē* there to provide the sanction of the Church. But even the cooperation of the *Abun* could not change the revolutionary character of this action. According to the *Kibre Negest* it was the House of David and the House of David only that should rule Ethiopia.[3] Tēwodros' only possibility to make himself a legitimate Emperor would have been to make a bold claim, whether founded or unfounded, that he was a descendant of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. In fact Tēwodros did not do this at the time of his coronation nor did he appropriate the title of *Aṣē* for himself. Tēwodros' contemporaries called him Nigus Tēwodros. His own secretary Zeneb does not refer to him as *Aṣē* once. This title is throughout Zeneb's chronicle reserved for members of the old Imperial family. Instead Zeneb speaks of Tēwodros as the man whom God had chosen to carry out his own plans.[4]

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[1] Foreign Office Records, Public Record Office, London, (F.O.), 93/2/1, Treaty of Amity and Commerce between Great Britain and Abyssinia, 2 Nov. 1849. For Palmerston's instructions see *Correspondence 1846-1868*, p. 8 B f. The constitutional situation on the Ethiopian side obviously caused some difficulties for the Foreign Office. While the Amharic text throughout speaks of the King of Abyssinia and the original is signed by Alī in that capacity, the published English text speaks of "His Majesty of Abyssinia", Alī is not inserted to correspond with Victoria, and the signature is said to be the "Signature of the Ras", thus making it possible to assume that "His Majesty of Abyssinia" refers to the Emperor, since his seal, although without his knowledge, was affixed to the treaty as well. See *Correspondence 1846—1868*, pp. 39 ff., 44 f., Plowden to Palmerston, 2 Apr., 2 Jan. 1850.

[2] Plowden's assumption, "He seems disposed, I should say, to extinguish even the title of Emperor when he finds its practicable, and to make himself supreme in name as well as fact", is probably an indication that the idea was present but the courage lacking; see *Correspondence 1846-1868*, p. 17, Plowden to Palmerston, 16 Aug. 1848.

This was no doubt the image of himself that Tēwodros encouraged at the time of his coronation and for several years thereafter. In the famous letter to Queen Victoria in November 1862 he styles himself "Elect of God, King of Kings, Tēwodros of Ethiopia." And to him it was something very real that he was the "elect", that God had lifted him up "out of the dust" and given him power.[5] It is the difference between his predecessors and himself that Tēwodros stresses, rather than the continuity, as, for example, when he writes in a communication to Plowden in March 1856:

> Till now Ethiopia has been without a Sovereign, but now that by the grace of God I wear the Crown, I shall not depart from those usages that become all Sovereigns.[6]

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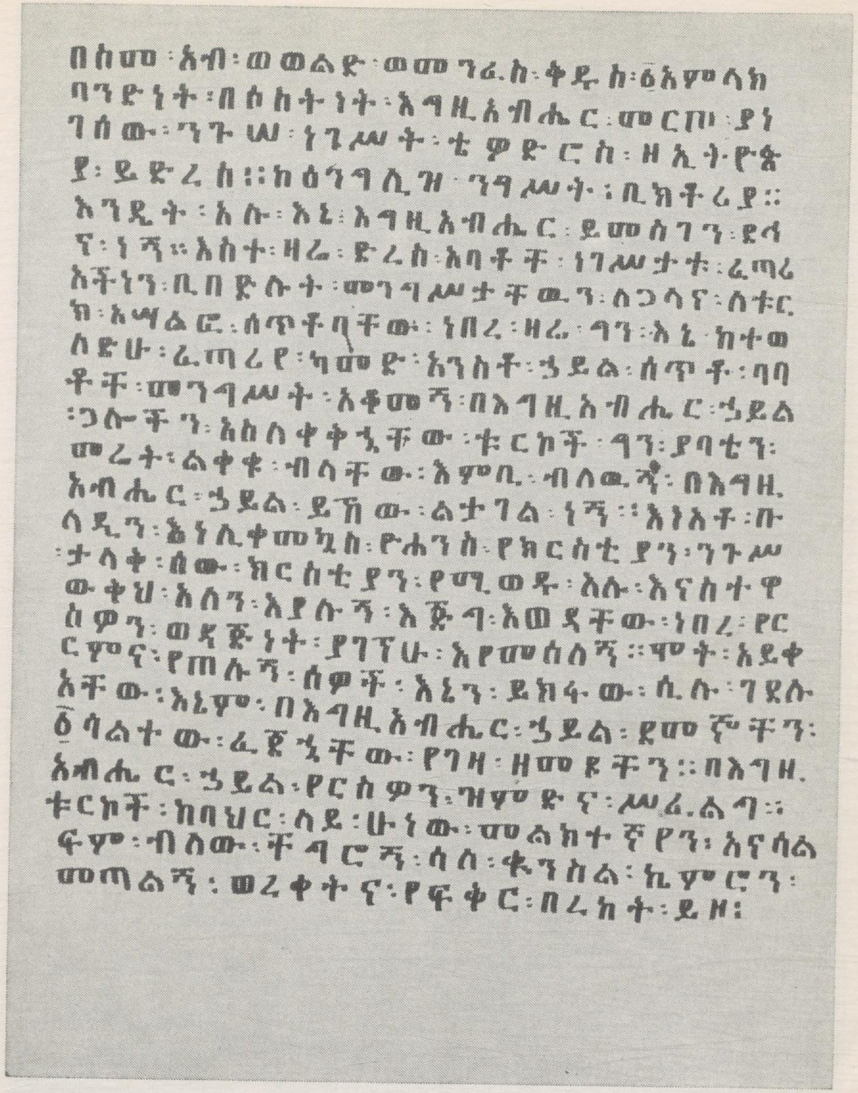
[3] Carl Bezold, ed., *Kebra Nagast: die Herrlichkeit der Könige* (München, 1905). The main theme of this work is the glorification of the Ethiopian monarchy on the grounds that it was a continuation of the kingdom of David through the son of Solomon with the Queen of Sheba.

[4] See page 13 above.

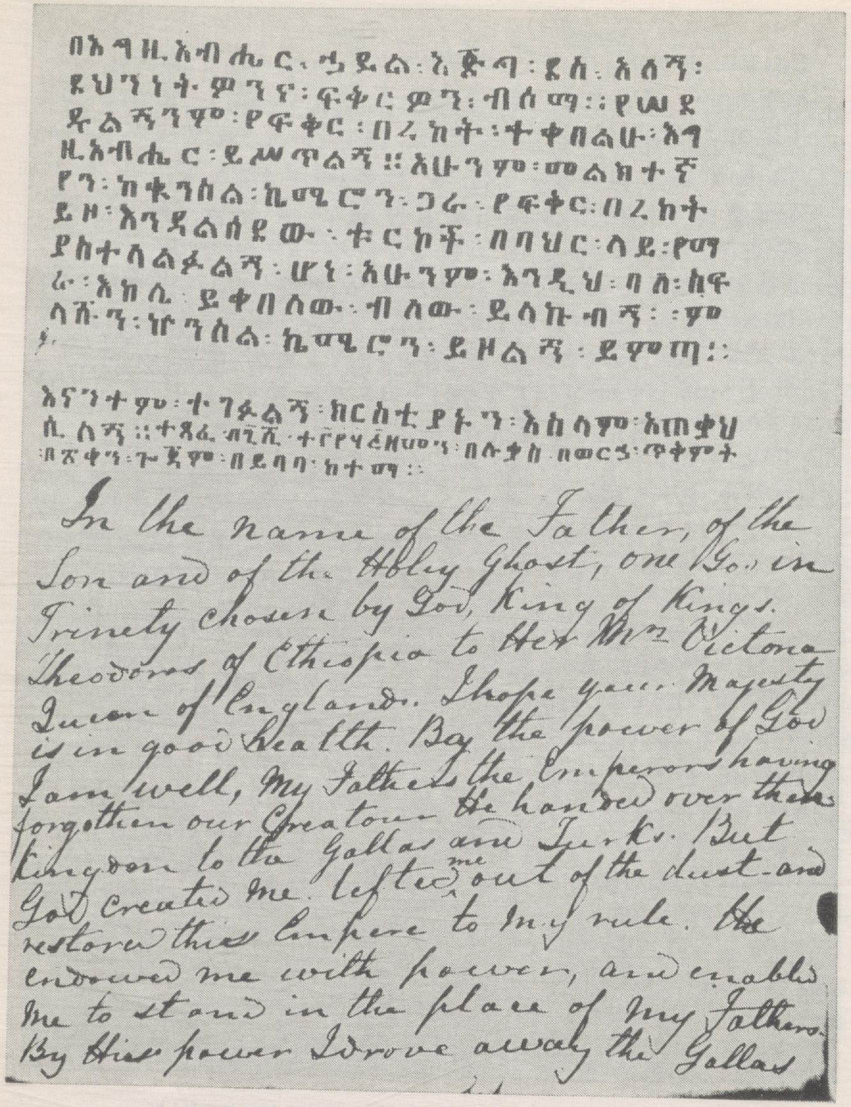
[5] F.O. 95/721, fol. 125 ff., Tēwodros to Victoria, 29 Oct. 1862. The English translation is printed in *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 224 f.

[6] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 165 f., Plowden to Clarendon, 5 Mar. 1856.



በስመ፡አብ፡ወወልድ፡ወመንፈስ፡ቅዱስ፡፩አምላክ
ባንድነቱ፡በሦስትነቱ፡እግዚአብሔር፡መርጦ፡ያነ
ገሠው፡ንጉሠ፡ነገሥት፡ቴዎድሮስ፡ዘኢትዮጵ
ያ፡ይድረስ።ከእንግሊዝ፡ንግሥት፡ቪክቶሪያ።
እንዴት፡አሉ፡እኔ፡እግዚአብሔር፡ይመስገን፡ደኅ
ና፡ነኝ።አስተ፡ዛሬ፡ድረስ፡አባቶቼ፡ነገሥታቱ፡ፈጣሪ
አችንን፡ቢበድሉት፡መንግሥታቸውን፡ለጋላና፡ለቱር
ክ፡አሣልፎ፡ሰጥቶባቸው፡ነበረ፡ዛሬ፡ግን፡እኔ፡ከተወ
ለድሁ፡ፈጣሪዬ፡ካመድ፡አንስቶ፡ኃይል፡ሰጥቶ፡ባባ
ቶቼ፡መንግሥት፡አቆመኝ፡በእግዚአብሔር፡ኃይል
፡ጋሎቹን፡አስለቀቅኋቸው፡ቱርኮች፡ግን፡ያባቴን፡
መሬት፡ልቀቁ፡ብላቸው፡እምቢ፡ብለውኝ፡በእግዚ
አብሔር፡ኃይል፡ይኸው፡ልታገል፡ነኝ። እነአቶ፡ቡ
ሳዲን፡ቈነሊቀመኳስ፡ዮሐንስ፡የክርስቲያን፡ንጉሠ
፡ታላቅ፡ሰው፡ክርስቲያን፡የሚወዱ፡አሉ፡እናስተዋ
ውቀህ፡አሰን፡እያሉኝ፡እጅግ፡እወዳቸው፡ነበረ፡የር
ስዎን፡ወዳጅነት፡ያገኘሁ፡እየመሰለኝ።ሞት፡አደቀ
ርሞና፡የጠሉኝ፡ሰዎች፡እኔን፡ይክፉው፡ሲሉ፡ገደሉ
አቸው፡እኔም፡በእግዚአብሔር፡ኃይል፡ደመኞቸን፡
፩ባልቱው፡ፈጀኋቸው፡የግዛ፡ዘመዶቸን።በእግዚ
አብሔር፡ኃይል፡የርስዎን፡ዝምድና፡ሥፈልግ።
ቱርኮች፡ከባህር፡ሰይ፡ሁነው፡መልክተኛየን፡አናሳል
ፍም፡ብለው፡ቸግሮኝ፡ሳለ፡ቈንስል፡ኪምሮን፡
መጣልኝ፡ወረቀትና፡የፍቅር፡በረከት፡ይዞ።

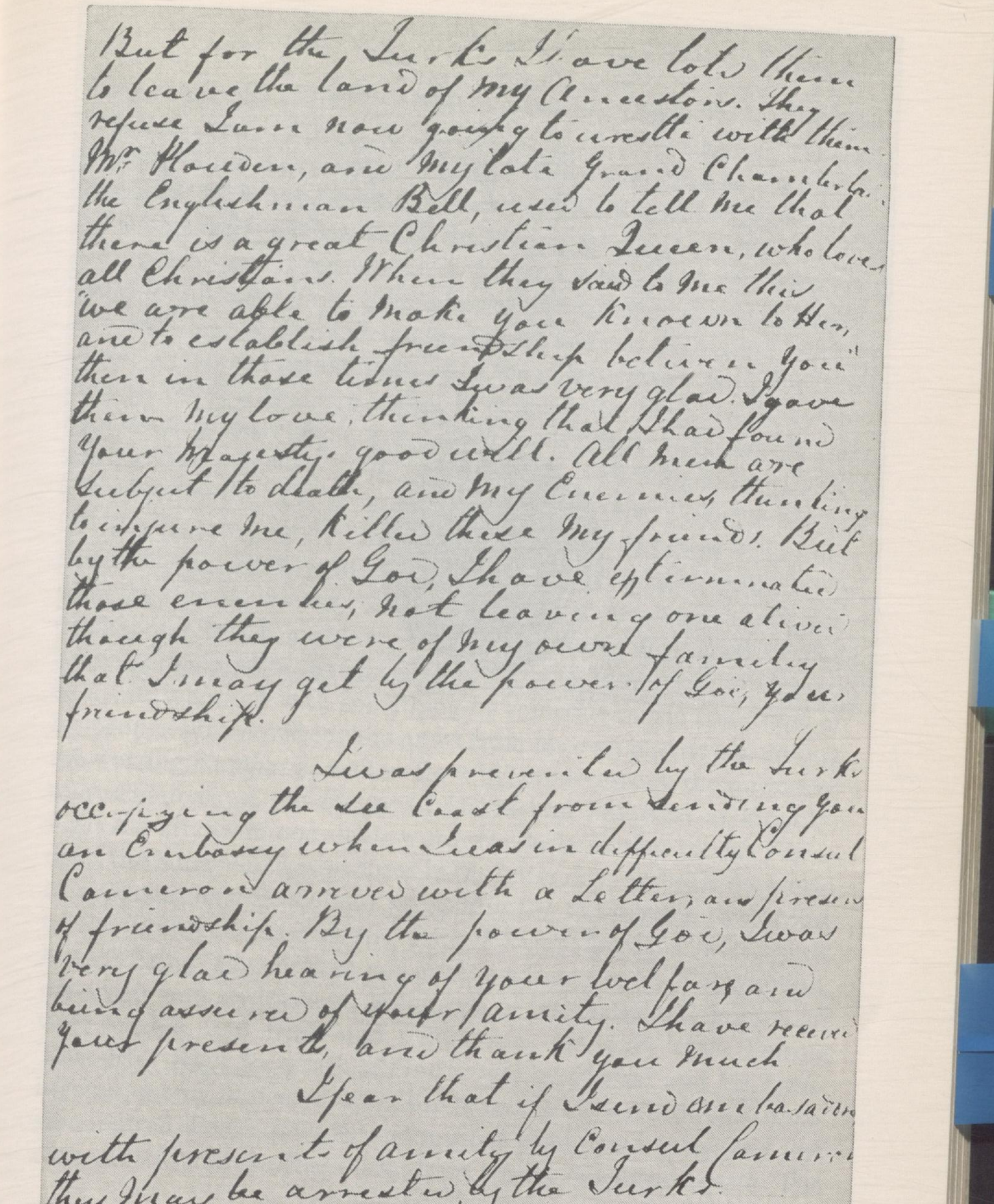
TEWODROS' LETTER TO QUEEN VICTORIA
29 OCTOBER 1862
From PRO, FO 95/721



በእግዚአብሔር፡ኃይል፡ኒጕሥ፡ደስ፡አለኝ፡
ደህንነትዎንና፡ፍቅርዎን፡ብሰማ፡፡የሠደ
ዱልኝንም፡የፍቅር፡በረከት፡ተቀበልሁ፡እግ
ዚአብሔር፡ይሥጥልኝ፡፡ አሁንም፡መልክተኛ
የን፡ከቈንስል፡ኪሜሮን፡ጋራ፡የፍቅር፡በረከት
ይዞ፡እንዳልሰደው፡ቱርኮች፡በባህር፡ላይ፡የማ
ያስተላልፉልኝ፡ሆነ፡አሁንም፡እንዲህ፡ብለ፡ስፍ
ራ፡እከሲ ይቀበለው፡ብለው፡ይሰኩብኝ፡፡ም
ሳሹን፡ከንስል፡ኪሜሮን፡ይዞልኝ፡ይምጣ፡፡

እናንተም፡ተገፉልኝ፡ክርስቲያኖችን፡እስሳም፡አጠቃህ
ሲ ለኝ፡፡ተጻፈ፡ብጊሺ፡ተ፲፰፻፶፭ዘመን፡በሉቃስ በወርኃ፡ጥቅምት
፡በ፲፱ቀን፡ጎጃም፡በደባባ፡ከተማ፡፡

In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, one God in Trinity chosen by God, King of Kings. Theodorus of Ethiopia to Her Mty Victoria Queen of England. I hope your Majesty is in good health. By the power of God I am well, My Fathers the Emperors having forgotten our Creator, He handed over their kingdom to the Gallas and Turks. But God created me, lifted me out of the dust and restored this Empire to my rule. He endowed me with power, and enabled me to stand in the place of my Fathers. By His power I drove away the Gallas

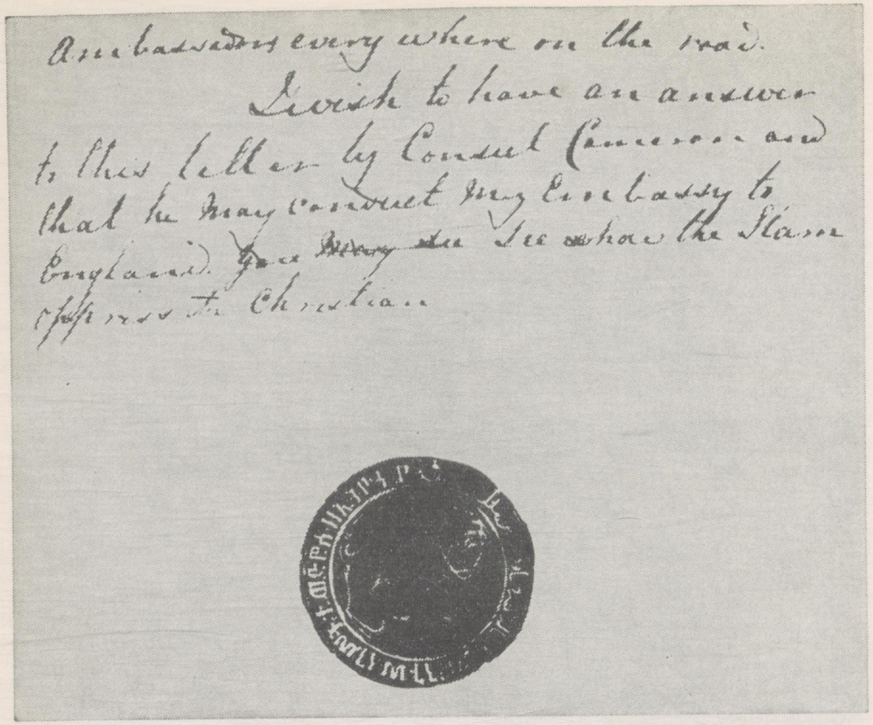


But for the Turks I have told them to leave the land of my Ancestors. They refuse. I am now going to wrestle with them. Mr Plowden, and my late Grand Chamberla the Englishman Bell, used to tell me that there is a great Christian Queen, who loves all Christians. When they said to me this "we are able to make you known to Her, and to establish friendship between you" then in those times I was very glad. I gave them my love, thinking that I had found your Majesty's good will. All men are subject to death, and my Enemies, thinking to injure me, killed these my friends. But by the power of God, I have exterminated those enemies, not leaving one alive though they were of my own family, that I may get by the power of God, your friendship.

I was prevented by the Turks occupying the Sea Coast from sending you an Embassy when I was in difficulty. Consul Cameron arrived with a Letter, and presen of friendship. By the power of God, I was very glad hearing of your welfare and being assured of your amity. I have receiv your presents, and thank you much.

I fear that if I send ambassadors with presents of amity by Consul Camero they may be arrested by the Turks.

And now I wish that yo may arrange for the safe passage of my



Ambassadors every where on the road.
I wish to have an answer
to this letter by Consul Cameron and
that he may conduct my Embassy to
England. You ~~may see~~ See what the Islam
oppress the Christian

The very first time that Tēwodros seems to have found it necessary to support his right to the throne by a direct reference to the Solomonian dynasty was at the trial of the missionaries Stern and Rosenthal in November 1863. They were accused of having abused the King, among other things, on account of his lowly birth. Two documents were presented to prove the greatness of the King: a list of all his most important victories and an account of his ancestors and their achievements all the way back to Solomon.[7] Later this argument was often repeated in the controversies with the foreigners, but it is hardly a matter of coincidence that a list of Tēwodros' own achievements was placed alongside or even before the genealogical evidence of his greatness. By 1866 "the son of David and of Solomon" had found its way into Tēwodros' official titles.[8]

To Kasa himself at the moment of his coronation it was undoubtedly his almost unbelievable success that constituted the main evidence that he was the "Elect of God". Nevertheless the grasping of supreme power could not be its own justification. Kasa needed to define his mission to himself and to his countrymen; he needed to identify himself with something or someone in the traditions of his people, that would set him apart from his own past as one among the warring *mesafint* as well as from his predecessors, the powerless representatives of the House of David and Solomon at Gonder. Kasa did all this in one single word. He declared that he was Tēwodros, the King who was to come in the latter days and rule the world in righteousness, peace and prosperity for forty years. According to the Ethiopian apocalyptic work *Fikkarē Īyesus,* Christ would himself bring Tēwodros to power after a long period of corruption, perversity and lawlessness, of the rule of imposters and women, of war, famine, and trials and tribulations of every kind. During Tēwodros' reign the wrath of God would be averted and his blessings and mercy bestowed upon the remnant of the faithful. Confusion, hatred, abuse, plunder and murder would pass away, and joy, contentment and the fear of the Lord would reign upon earth. The ruined churches and cities would be rebuilt and all would live in peace, obeying the orders of the King and the Bishop.[9]

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[7] Flad, *op. cit.*, I, p. 65 ff.; Stern, *Captive Missonary*, p. 95 ff.

[8] F.O. 95/725, fol. 226, Tēwodros to Victoria, 17 Apr. 1866; printed in *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 468.

This prophecy was widespread, and had in the hopes of the people mingled with some legendary elements of the history of Tēwodros I, who had ruled Ethiopia briefly in the beginning of the fifteenth century and had found his way into the Ethiopian Synaxarium, where his memory is celebrated on the day of his death, Senē 29.[10]

[illegible] 6

According to Bruce:

> There must have been something very brilliant that happened under this prince, for though the reign is so short, it is before all others the most favourite epoch in Abyssinia. It is even confidently believed, that he is to rise again, and reign in Abyssinia for a thousand years, and in this period all war is to cease, and every one, in fulness, to enjoy happiness, plenty, and peace.[11]

The disturbed and difficult times of the *Zemene Mesafint* had increased the expectations of the advent of Tēwodros. The name had been abused by court flatterers who had attributed it to Emperor Tekle Gīyorgīs.[12] Impostors had arisen in various parts of the country and claimed to be Tēwodros, but they had not lasted long. At the end of 1831 Farīs Alī had tried to enthrone a man called Igwale Anbesa who was not of the royal family but who proclaimed that he was Tēwodros. Emperor Sahle Dingil soon saw to it that his head was cut off and hanged in a tree in the big square of Gonder.[13]

How living this expectation was is evident from a conversation recorded by Gobat between himself and a Felasha priest. When the missionary asked the Felasha whether he knew about the coming of the Messiah, he answered that he thought this was Tēwodros.

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[9] René Basset, ed., *Les apocryphes Éthiopiens, XI, Fekkaré Iyasous* (Paris, 1909), p. 25 f.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 10 f.; E.A. Wallis Budge, ed., *The Book of the Saints of the Ethiopian Church* (4 vols., Cambridge, 1928), IV, p. 1045. See also Weld Blundell, *The Royal Chronicle*, Appendix F.

[11] Bruce, *op. cit.*, II, p. 64 f.

[12] *Royal Chronicle*, p. 284 f.

[13] *Cronaca reale*, pp. 894 f., 911 ff.

As for the time, however: "We know nothing about it: some say the time is near; others, that it is still distant." But Gobat's learned friend in the Ethiopian Church Habte Sillasē had already lost hope: "The time fixed by this prophecy is elapsed, and Theodore has not appeared."[14]

When Kasa began to think of himself as Tēwodros we do not know. But the fact that he did not make any public declaration until he had defeated all his enemies and rivals in central Ethiopia lent more credibility to the claim. Whether Tēwodros himself sincerely believed that he was the fulfilment of the prophecy is, in Lejean's words: "Question délicate, à laquelle, même après l'avoir personnellement connu, je ne sais trop que répondre. Je crois cependant qu'il était sincère...."[15] There is in any case no reason to doubt that Tēwodros looked upon his rise to power as the result of Divine intervention and himself as the servant of God, or, as he so often put it himself, "the slave of Christ".[16] Tēwodros was a man of faith "sincerely though often mistakenly religious", even to the extent of causing some concern to a man like Consul Plowden:

> His faith is signal; without Christ, he says, I am nothing; if he has destined me to purify and reform this distracted kingdom, with His aid who shall stay me: nay, sometimes he is on the point of not caring for human assistance at all, and this is one reason why he will not seek with much avidity for assistance from or alliance with Europe.[17]

As a man of faith, Tēwodros was also a man of action. In Plowden's words:

> ... of untiring energy, both mental and bodily, his personal and moral daring are boundless ... Indefatigable in business,

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[14] Gobat, *op. cit.*, p. 173. See also Charles William Isenberg and John Ludvig Krapf, *Journals of the Rev. Messrs. Isenberg and Krapf* (London, 1843), p. 496 f.

[15] Lejean, *op. cit.*, p. 51. See also Dufton, *op. cit.*, p. 114 f.

[16] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, pp. 9, 16, 18, 21.

[17] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 148 ff., Plowden to Clarendon, 25 June 1855.

he takes little repose night or day; his ideas and language are clear and precise; hesitation is not known to him;[18]

With these qualities Tēwodros was bound to make extraordinary efforts to change conditions in his country so that the happy era associated with the reign of the Tēwodros of the prophecies would come true.

Not only Tēwodros' countrymen but also foreigners saw the King's program in connection with his name. Consul Plowden summed it up in three points: "... reform Abyssinia, restore the Christian faith, and become master of the world".[19]

The political reformation or restoration of Ethiopia first of all implied the unification of the country as a condition for peace and order. To a certain extent this had already been achieved through Tēwodros' victories before his coronation. The Galla territories of Yeju and Wello and the kingdom of Shewa still remained to be incorporated, and Tēwodros was so eager to get this done that he started for Wello in the middle of Lent, spent Easter on the march and campaigned during the rainy season. Nigus Hayle Melekot of Shewa and Weyzero Werqītu, ruler of the Wello Gallas, made an attempt to present a common front in July, but Ras Alī advised them not to risk a major battle since there was no possibility of defeating Tēwodros in any case. Hayle Melekot returned to Shewa, but the Gallas kept up their resistance throughout the rainy season. On September 22 the stronghold Meqdela, which was later to play such an important rôle as Tēwodros' main fortress, treasury and state prison, was captured from the Gallas. Tēwodros appointed a governor over the area and proceeded to Shewa.[20]

The governors of the northern districts there surrendered without much resistance. But as Tēwodros moved southwards through Menz the people began to burn their grain and houses rather than see anything fall into the hands of their enemies. When Tēwodros reached Debre Birhan and Ankober he found these residence towns of Hayle Melekot in ashes. Some of the Shewan chiefs tried to stop

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[18] *Ibid.*

[19] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 143 f., Plowden to Clarendon, 7 Apr. 1855.

[20] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 19 ff.; *Nuovi documenti*, p. 410 f.

Tēwodros' advance, but there seems to have been little coordination, probably because Hayle Melekot was ill and died on November 9. The chiefs took Hayle Melekot's young son and heir Minīlik with them and sought refuge in Minjar near the Awash River. Ten days after the death of the Shewan king some of Tēwodros' troops under the command of Ras Ingida met and defeated these chiefs at Bereket. After this battle the Shewans agreed that further resistance was useless and brought Minīlik to Tēwodros' camp. The Emperor spent some months more in Shewa establishing peace and order among the Gallas there. Then he appointed Hayle Melekot's brother Hayle Mīka'ēl governor of Shewa and crossed the Abbay from Jarso into Gojam in March 1856. By July Tēwodros was back in Gonder.[21] His armies had been victorious wherever he had gone. To the extent that conquest means unification this part of Tēwodros' programme was completed. How superficial this unity was would become increasingly obvious as the months and years passed.

Tēwodros was clearly aware that many governmental and administrative reforms were necessary in order to give Ethiopia unity, peace and order. First of all it was necessary to break the feudal pattern of government in which provinces and districts belonged almost by hereditary right to certain individuals and families, who taxed their subjects at their own discretion, paid an often purely nominal tribute—and sometimes none at all—to the central authority and used the rest for their private households and armies. The latter had become instruments in the political struggle and although campaigns and battles were seldom fought to the bitter end, both the peasantry and all others engaged in peaceful occupations suffered from pillaging and in the intervals from the general lack of security.[22]

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[21] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 22 ff.; Welde Maryam, *Tēwodros*, p. 8 ff.; Guèbrè Sellassié, *Chronique du Règne de Ménélik II, roi des rois d'Éthiopie*, ed. by M. de Coppet, (2 vols., Paris, 1930—31), I, p. 82 ff. On the dates of Hayle Melekot's death and the battle of Bereket, Gebre Sillasē is the most reliable source. An earlier version of his chronicle, MS Eth. 261, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, fol. 19 f., gives the day of the week for each event and they coincide with the dates, Friday, Ṭiqimt 30 (Nov. 9), and Monday, Hidar 10 (Nov. 19). On the other hand, Minīlik's chronicler in an attempt to cover up the defeat of the Shewans comes out with both sides as winners; cf. p. 86 with p. 88.

To put an end to this Tēwodros resolved that governors and judges should be his personal salaried appointees and that all military forces should be integrated into a national army under his command. This army should be properly organised and disciplined, and wages or allowances should take the place of indiscriminate pillaging.[23] Even before he became Emperor, Tēwodros had done so much in this direction that the chronicler expressed surprise at his army, which passed through districts without plundering them.[24] It was, of course, impossible to make the change to a salaried army all at once, but there need be no doubt about Tēwodros' intention at this time. Even when he marched into the hostile Wello country in 1855 he told his army that they were allowed to take grain only and when he found some soldiers who had slaughtered cattle he rebuked them severely for having done this to the property of the poor.[25] Some months later in Shewa he undertook major organizational reforms in the army:

> ... marshalling the soldiers into regiments, appointing officers of different grades, fixing their pay and the number of their private servants, and also mixing up soldiers from several provinces at random in those regiments, thus striking a mighty blow against the feudal system, under which the men clustered round the Chief of their native district, and followed him only in obedience or in revolt.[26]

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[22] See in particular Arnauld d'Abbadie, *op. cit.*, pp. 333 f., 376 ff.; *Correspondence 1846—1868*, pp. 67 ff., 97 ff., Plowden to Granville, 20 June1852, Plowden to Clarendon, 9 July 1854.

[23] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, pp. 132, 143 f., 148 ff., 171, Plowden to Clarendon, 25 Sept. 1854, 7 Apr., 25 June 1855, 5 Aug. 1856.

[24] *Nuovi documenti*, p. 407.

[25] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 19.

[26] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 165 f., Plowden to Clarendon, 5 Mar. 1856. Cf. Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 24 f., where the two items of the reform mentioned are the counting of the men and the appointing of officers called "chief of thousand, chief of hundred, chief of fifty and chief of ten", titles still used in Amharic in the Ethiopian army.

In connection with his coronation Tēwodros is reported to have made a proclamation exhorting the farmer to plough and the trader to trade and assuring the landowner that he would be allowed to keep his inherited land. At the same time he also urged thieves and robbers to quit their trade and threatened them with mutilation if they did not. People who had been wronged were invited to appeal to him and the destitute to approach him as their father.[27] There is much evidence that the King got more than he bargained for as supreme judge of his people, but also that he took this responsibility very seriously, devoting from two or three o'clock in the morning "almost daily, several hours to the swarms of plaintiffs and defendants, who, in the city and also in the camp, assail his ears with the monotonous wail 'Justice, *Jane hoi*! Justice, *Jane hoi*!' ".[28] The King's administration of justice was certainly fairer and more consistent than what the people were used to but it was hardly less severe in the case of major crimes. Execution or mutilation were the normal punishments for robbery, murder and, of course, treason and rebellion.[29] The type of mutilation which Tēwodros prohibited was the emasculation of captured enemies.[30] He also abolished the established custom that kinsmen of a murderer or even someone who had caused the death of another person by accident had to answer with their lives or a ransom even if they were completely innocent of the crime or accident.[31] That Tēwodros' administration of justice yielded results in terms of safety of life and property was noticed by several travellers.[32]

The restoration of the Christian faith as perceived by Tēwodros in the light of the prophecy and the circumstances, involved several steps. There was first the question of the moral standards of the King himself and of his Christian subjects. After having described the sin and evil that prevailed in Ethiopia before, Zeneb draws the following picture of Tēwodros at the beginning of his reign:

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[27] Fusella, *op. cit.*, p. 12. Cf. Welde Maryam, *Tēwodros*, p. 14; Lejean , *op. cit.*, p. 63; Dufton, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

[28] Krapf, *op. cit.*, p. 457 f.; Stern, *Wanderings*, p. 126; Flad, *op. cit.*, I, p. 12.

[29] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, pp. 19, 22, 26 etc.; Welde Maryam, *Tēwodros*, p. 7 f.; Stern, *Wanderings*, p. 125 ff.

[30] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, pp. 77, 146, Plowden to Russell, 28 July 1853, and Plowden to Clarendon, 3 Mar. 1855.

[31] Welde Maryam, *Tēwodros*, p. 15.

[32] Stern, *Wanderings*, p. 129; Lejean, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

> When God saw all this wickedness he placed over Habisha [Abyssinia] King Tēwodros, who did not like adultery, who did not like money, lying, theft, who did not like any kind of dishonesty, who feared God, gave liberally, loved the stranger, who felt compassion for the sick, who partook of the Holy Communion with one woman [*i.e.*, married one wife].[33]

This is in brief the ideal of the Christian Church both universally and in Ethiopia in particular. The interesting thing is that it was for Tēwodros not only an image to be projected to his people but an ideal that he made real efforts to live up to. He married Tewabech by the Sacrament before his coronation and although she never gave him a child he is reported to have been strictly faithful to her as long as she lived and to have had scruples about a second marriage after her death because the law of the Ethiopian church that priests may not remarry was sometimes said to apply also to kings. After eighteen months he was, however, convinced, reportedly by his British friend John Bell, that a second marriage was not against the Holy Scriptures, and consequently remarried with a daughter of Dejazmach Wibē named Ṭirunesh or Ṭiruwerq.[34] By his own example he thus "discouraged polygamy and concubinage" and according to some reports he actually forbade polygamy in his army. This was hardly an edict that would be universally obeyed, but in order not to expose themselves to the King's displeasure many of

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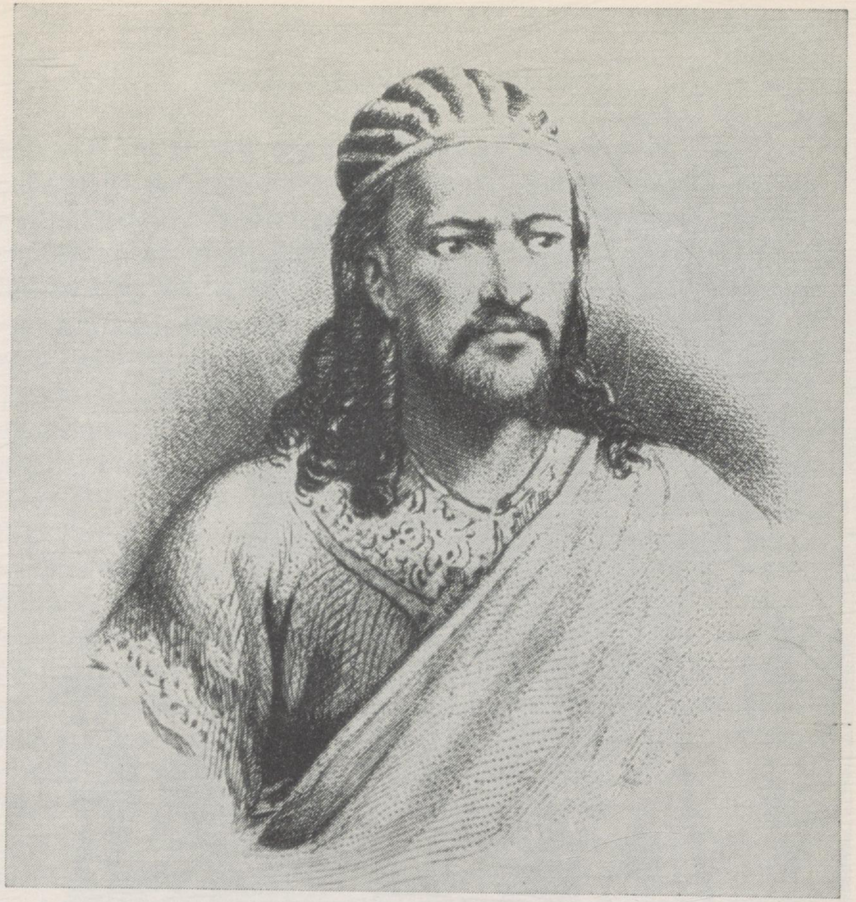
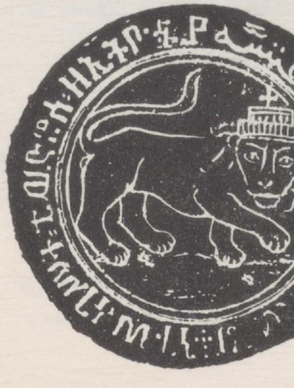
[33] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 5.

[34] Stern, *Wanderings*, pp. 112, 118 ff.; Lejean, *op. cit.*, p. 183 ff. Tēwodros' marriage with Ṭiruwerq was reportedly less happy than with Tewabech, his companion during the difficult years, and he began to keep concubines although not without remorse. Ṭiruwerq bore him his son Alemayehu whom he looked upon as his heir during the last years of his life. Tēwodros had, however, children from at least one wife of his youth as well. His son Meshesha, born about 1840, was governor of Dembiya during the first years of his father's reign; see *Nuovi documenti*, p. 408, and Lejean, *op. cit.*, p. 214 f.



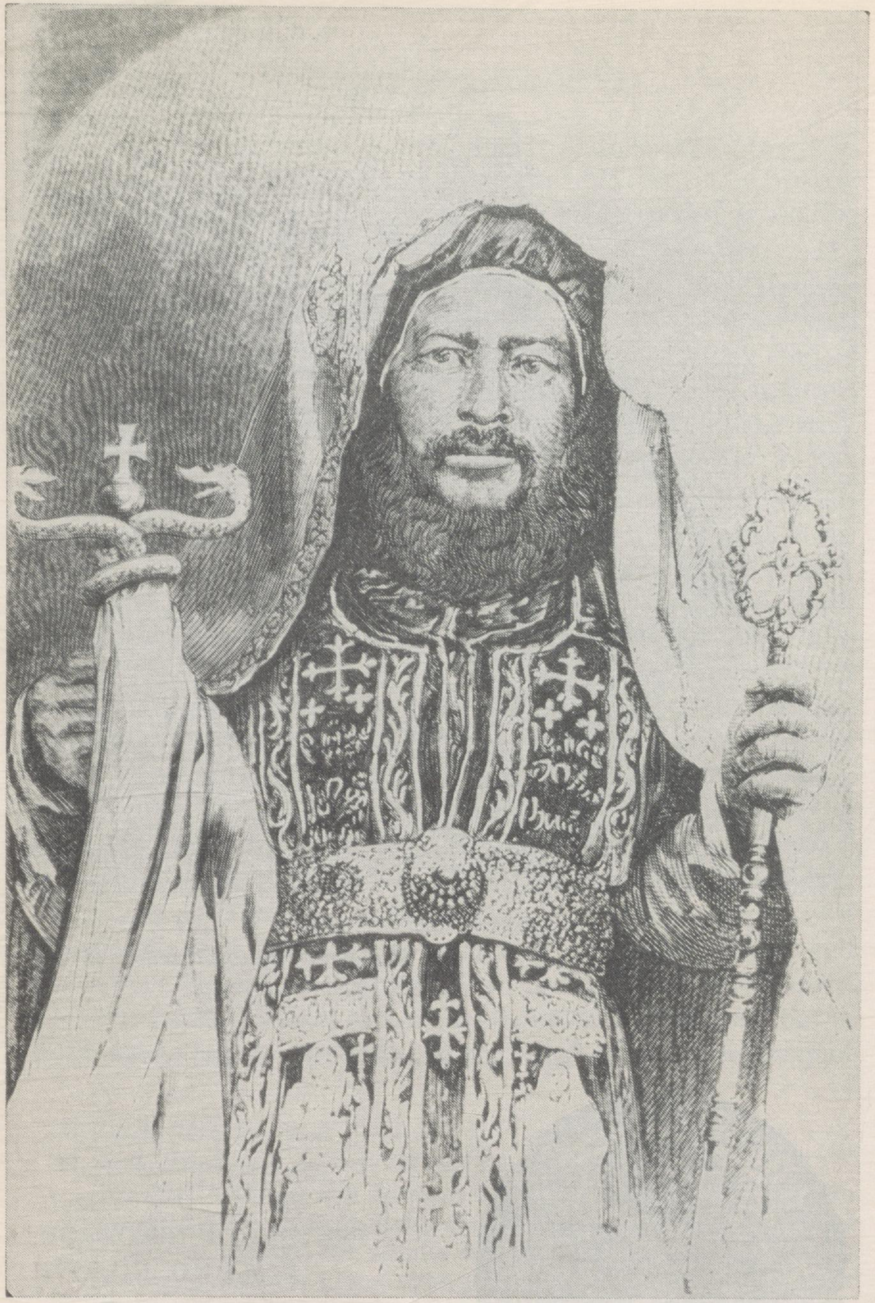
TEWODROS IN 1863

From Guillaume Lejean, *Théodore II; le nouvel empire d'Abyssinie*



THE SEAL OF TEWODROS

From PRO, FO 95/721



ABUNE SELAMA

From Henry A. Stern, *Wanderings among the Falashas*

his chiefs and officers reportedly followed his example.[35] Tēwodros' concern for destitute children and for other poor and needy people is well attested, his freedom from greed and his generosity towards strangers likewise. His personal needs were comparatively small and his roaming life hindered him from developing a taste for luxury.[36]

Although Tēwodros certainly included the clergy among those who needed a moral regeneration,[37] there was another aspect of Tēwodros' restoration of the Christian faith in Ethiopia which was concerned more specifically with the Church and its monks and priests. Because of the disunity in doctrinal matters and the way King Sahle Sillasē and Ras Alī had taken sides in these conflicts, the Head of the Church, Abune Selama, had lived much of his first twelve years in the country in exile in Tigrē, where his definition of the doctrine of the nature of Christ was more generally, although by no means universally, accepted.[38] In the last phase of his rise to power Tēwodros had obtained the support of the Bishop, who no doubt as a compensation stipulated that the King should help him against his enemies, the Roman Catholic missionaries and particularly his rival, Bishop de Jacobis, as well as the leaders of the "Son of Grace" and "Three births" factions of the clergy who had opposed his teaching.[39] Tēwodros accepted this and a cooperation between King and Bishop entirely in accordance with the prophecy of the Fikkarē Īyesus began. De Jacobis had to leave Gonder and much of the work of the Catholic mission was destroyed.[40] Abune

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[35] Welde Maryam, *Tēwodros*, p. 10; *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 143 f., Plowden to Clarendon, 7 Apr. 1855; Stern, *Wanderings*, p. 120; Dufton, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

[36] Heuglin, *op. cit.*, p. 44; Krapf, *op. cit.*, p. 457 f.; Stern, *Wanderings*, p. 100; Lejean, *op. cit.*, pp. 181 f., 210; Dufton, *op. cit.*, pp. 106 ff., 139; *Correspondence 1846—1868*, pp. 148 ff., 183 f., Plowden to Clarendon, 25 June 1855, 25 Nov. 1857; Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 37 f.

[37] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 4; Flad, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 35, 47 f.

[38] In addition to the sources referred to in note 10, p. 19, see *Vicende dell' Etiopia*, pp. 468 ff., 476 ff., 483 ff.

[39] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, pp. 92, 135, Plowden to Clarendon, 29 June and 29 Nov. 1854; Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 4.

[40] *Vicende dell'Etiopia*, p. 514; *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 143 f., Plowden to Clarendon, 7 Apr. 1855.

Selama then accompanied Tēwodros to Shewa and enforced the acceptance of his doctrinal views there.[41]

Whether Tēwodros had any personal convictions in these doctrinal matters or not it is impossible to say; there seems to have been an initial understanding that he and the *Abun* should in any case not interfere in each other's spheres.[42] Besides the deference paid to the Bishop in spiritual matters, Tēwodros was probably influenced by the belief that religious uniformity would also strengthen the political unity of his country. Nevertheless, he extended a welcome to Protestant missionaries during the early years of his reign. This may well have been due to their unassuming approach. The Chrishona brethren were laymen without any ecclesiastical pretentions who came to settle in the country and earn their living by making their skills available to the King while carrying out their mission by distributing bibles, opening schools and teaching the people.[43] The other mission founded by Stern aimed at the conversion of the Jewish Felashas to Christianity, a task of which both Tēwodros and the Bishop expressed their full approval.[44] Consul Plowden was hardly in favour of any missionaries in Ethiopia of whatever creed or nationality,[45] but when he felt obliged to defend the King's policy with regard to the Catholics he wrote of the Chrishona brethren:

> While on this subject of persecution, I may inform your Lordship that some German Protestant Missionaries are now in the country: I do not know that they are doing much good or any harm; but the King allows them to ramble about where they please, and to distribute their books as they like without remark; this I believe is not allowed even in so enlightened a state as Sardinia.[46]

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[41] Welde Maryam, *Tēwodros*, p. 9 f.; cf. Stern, *Wanderings*, p. 135 ff.

[42] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 31; Stern, *Wanderings*, p. 137.

[43] Krapf, *op. cit.*, p. 451 ff.; Flad, *op. cit.*, I, p. 9 ff. For the views of outsiders on Tēwodros' attitude towards these missionaries and their work, see Lejean, *op. cit.*, p. 77 ff., and Plowden, *op. cit.*, p. 461 f.

[44] Stern, *Wanderings*, pp. 57, 113, 228.

[45] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 143 f., Plowden to Clarendon, 7 Apr.1855.

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 172 f., Plowden to Clarendon, 11 Nov. 1856.

In fact Tēwodros would begin to have trouble with his own Bishop and clergy long before the foreign missionaries from Germany and England, and when the conflict with the latter broke out it was not because of religious or doctrinal matters.

With regard to Islam, Tēwodros was as a Christian ruler resolved to push back its positions in Ethiopia, a policy which could, however, be derived as much from internal and external political considerations as from any crusading spirit as such. The reports that Tēwodros had ordered "the Mahometans in his dominions to become Christians within the year" or given "the Mussulmans now residing in Abyssinia ... the option of being baptized or of leaving the country" were later corrected by Plowden himself by the assertion in November 1856: "Up to this time the King has not forced a single individual of that creed to change his faith." Tēwodros had "uttered the threat of forcing them [the Were Hīmano Gallas] to acknowledge Christianity, and either to rebuild the numerous churches destroyed by them in the last 200 years, or to quit his territories" but this was according to the Consul "a political and dynastic question rather than a religious one".[47] The truth of the matter is probably that it needed the mind of the British Consul to separate the political and religious aspects, and that he made out the King to be more broad-minded on this matter than he really was.[48] To "the slave of Christ" political supremacy was a means of christianizing and rechristianizing the population, and the growing moral and spiritual strength of the Christian population a guarantee against a relapse into the rule of the country by the largly Muslim Galla faction. In Tēwodros' own words, as reported by Zeneb, the aim was to have Amharas and Gallas eat at the same table as soon as possible.[49]

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[47] *Ibid.*, pp. 143 ff., 148 ff., 172 f., Plowden to Clarendon, 7 Apr. 1855, 25 June 1855, 11 Nov. 1856. Zeneb mentions no conversions whether voluntary or enforced during the campaign among the Muslim Gallas in 1855.

[48] The judgement of Dufton, *op. cit.*, p. 116 f., is probably more correct on this issue.

[49] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 21.

Tēwodros' attitude towards the Muslims in his country cannot be isolated from the third and ultimate goal of his life: to become master of the world. The universal, cosmic character of other apocalyptical literature applies to the *Fikkarē Īyesus* as well. If Tēwodros believed that he was Tēwodros at all, it was impossible for him to escape the universal implications of his calling. In the biblical and ecclesiastical literature as well as in the minds of most Ethiopians who knew of anything beyond the boundaries of their own country, Jerusalem was the centre of the world. But Jerusalem was in the hands of the Muslims, the Turks, and it was only natural that Tēwodros would want to do for Jerusalem what he had done for Ethiopia: establish Christian rule there.

There is rational logic in the very mysticism of the appellation Tēwodros is said to have given himself: "The husband of Ethiopia and the betrothed (or the lover) of Jerusalem".[50] But is this really anything more than a set of ideas ascribed to Tēwodros, a designation attributed to him by others? Was the historical Tēwodros, Kasa from Qwara, all that ignorant of the world? Most likely Tēwodros had his days of faith and of disbelief as other men. At times the information provided by Bell or Plowden might have brought home to him that universal domination or even the conquest of Jerusalem were far beyond his means. But it should not be taken for granted that the step from the throne of Ethiopia to universal domination seemed any more unrealistic to him than his way from the forests of Qwara to the castles of Gonder.

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[50] The correct phrase and the one preserved by oral tradition is የሐበሻ ፡ ባል ፡ የኢየሩሳሌም ፡ እጮኛ ፡, the last word *iç̣hoñña* meaning 'betrothed, fiancé'. This is the form given by Tekle-Tsadik Mekouria, *Ye-Ītyopya Tarīk ke-Aṣē Tēwodros iske Qedamawī Hayle Sillasē* (Addīs Abeba, 1953/54, 4th ed.) , p. 34, with the exception that Tekle-Tsadik uses *Ītyopya* instead of *Habesha.* Fusella, *op. cit.*, p. 32, however, has የሐበሻ ፡ ባል፡የኢየሩሳሌም ፡ ውሽማ ፡, the last word *wishimma* meaning 'concubine, lover'. Desta Tekle Weld, *Gebetawarīya Yenibab Memarīya* (Dirē Dawa, 1935), p. 59, also has ውሽማ — *wishimma,* but if Tēwodros used the phrase at all himself, he would not have spoken of himself as a 'concubine' or 'lover', which presupposes that he would actually have reached his goal, the conquest of Jerusalem.

It was at the end of his life when all his hopes and plans had crumbled to dust that Tēwodros wrote: "I had intended, if God had so decreed, to conquer the whole world...."[51] But already while Tēwodros was subduing Shewa in 1855, Zeneb reports a strange mutiny in his army founded on rumours that he intended to march on Jerusalem. This was more than some of the soldiers from Damot were prepared to accept and so one night they proclaimed in the name of the *Abun* and the *Iç̣hegē* that anyone who "followed this King, cutting firewood, drawing water, or harvesting grass for him" was excommunicated. The ecclesiastics disassociated themselves from the mutineers, and the mutiny was quelled.[52] It is interesting to note that reports in the meantime reached Gonder that Tēwodros had gone as far as Harer.[53] The latter was of course wrong but it all shows how living the idea of a campaign beyond the boundaries of the country was in Tēwodros' army. Plowden writing in June 1855 was more confident that Tēwodros would do first things first:

> Next year he will devote to the settlement of Tigré, including the tribes along the coast, and meditates the occupation of Massowah. After that he wishes to reclaim all the provinces lately conquered by Egypt along his northern frontier; even Khartoum, as his by right: nor does his military ardour hesitate to dream of the conquest of Egypt, and a triumphant march to the Holy Sepulchre.[54]

This statement combines the vital foreign policy aims of Ethiopia, the strengthening of the northern and western borderlands by the occupation of the Red Sea coast and the reconquest of areas lost to the Egyptians in the Sudan, with the dreams of early Crusaders. Tēwodros could seek the fulfilment of both at the same time, and it is impossible to say which was the more compelling motivation. The Egyptian conquest of the Sudan had completely changed the position on the western frontier of Ethiopia. There Ethiopia now had an aggressive, comparatively well-organized and well-armed neighbour. Kinfu and Wibē had fought the Egyptians each on his front. But there had not been any strong unified reaction; for the central authorities, the Emperor and the *Ras*, the problem hardly existed. Personal experiences combined with the ideas that he was called to reconquer all the borderlands lost to the Muslims in the past and give Ethiopia a respected place in the family of nations made Tēwodros respond to the challenges and thereby inaugurate a new period in Ethiopian history, a period with foreign relations influencing the course of events to an extent which they had not done since the days of Ahmed Grañ, Christopher da Gama and Pero Pais.

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[51] See p. 14, n. 8 above.

[52] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 25 f.

[53] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, pp. 163, 165 f., Plowden to Clarendon, 8 Feb. and 5 Mar. 1856.

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 148 ff., Plowden to Clarendon, 25 June 1855.

The first thing that Tēwodros saw that he needed was a better army. This was only partly a question of organization and loyalty. Other vital aspects were arms, tactics and training. It was enough for Tēwodros to have seen the two field pieces at Dabarkī in action to make him determined that he would have cannon too. Soon after we find him hollowing out and hooping large tree-trunks for cannon and establishing a fortified stronghold for himself in Ṭaqusa.[55] Kinfu could still speak contemptuously of the Egyptians, who "make war as a herd of slaves" and declare that he preferred "the disorder and the daring individuality" of his own men.[56] Tēwodros in contrast was fully prepared to employ Turks who happened to cross his way to drill and discipline his soldiers.[57] Later on, Bell, who had been with Ras Alī for almost ten years, offered his services to Tēwodros, who asked him among other things to drill his soldiers, which Bell found to be an ungrateful task.[58] Tēwodros also developed the tactics he had used in his early career, cutting down on the numbers of camp-followers to allow swift marches and surprise attacks.[59]

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[55] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 14.

[56] d'Abbadie, *op. cit.*, p. 312.

[57] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 76 f., Plowden to Russell, 25 July 1853.

[58] Krapf, *op. cit.*, p. 454; Dufton, *op. cit.*, pp. 150, 183 f. Cf. A.E., Afrique 61, fol. 130 ff., Lejean to Drouyn de Lhuys, 28 Jan. 1863.

[59] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, pp. 97 ff., 179 f., Plowden to Clarendon, 9 July 1854, 2 Apr. 1857.

As his contacts with foreigners increased, his military interests concentrated more and more on the import and manufacture of modern arms, but Tēwodros' aspirations for his country included much more than military power. He took active steps to recruit instructors, engineers, builders and artisans of all kinds "to improve and develop the resources of his country". According to the traveller Dufton he even "entertained the project of sending to England and France some of his more intelligent subjects, to learn useful arts and manufactures".[60]

Tēwodros' second way of responding to the challenge of the new era and of the old dream was by embarking on an active foreign policy. This was of course necessary already as a means of obtaining the desired "technical aid". But the Emperor was also aware of the importance of allying his country with other Christian powers.

Tēwodros' forerunners among the *mesafint*, Sahle Sillasē, Alī, Wibē and to some extent even the earlier Tigreans Sebagadis and Welde Sillasē had all been receiving explorers and adventurers, missionaries and more or less official representatives of European governments. They had accepted the gifts brought to impress them, and by the eighteen-forties even started to sign official treaties brought for their signature. But beyond this and sometimes asking for more gifts, usually firearms, the Ethiopian part in the opening up of the country was passive.

Alī's attitude may not be typical of all the princes, but it illustrates the point. In 1849 Plowden arrived in Debre Tabor with a rather lengthy agreement which he wanted to negotiate with Ras Alī. After putting off all discussions for almost a year Alī finally agreed to listen to the reading of the draft, but while doing so,

> he kept talking to his favourite *shoomeree* about a horse that was tied in the tent ... On his asking me some trifling question, in answer, I begged his attention to what was being read, to which he assented, and yawned exceedingly ... the Ras said that he saw no harm whatever in the document; on the con-

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[60] *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 143, 173 f., Plowden to Russell, 28 July 1853, Barroni to Bruce, 15 Apr. 1855, Plowden to Clarendon, 12 Nov. 1856; Krapf, *op.cit.*, p. 456; Dufton, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

trary, that it was excellent, but appeared to him exceedingly useless, inasmuch as he did not suppose, as Abyssinia was then constituted, that one English merchant would or could enter it in ten years.[61]

That any Ethiopian merchants would ever take advantage of the clauses guaranteeing them the right of free movement and the privileges of "subjects of the most favoured nation" in Great Britain was completely beyond Ras Alī's horizon. And Plowden took this for granted: "Their subjects visit not Europe, and we can only make them a return in two ways ..." These were to place Ethiopian merchants and their trade at Massawa under the protection of the British flag and to liberate Christian slaves brought there.[62] Alī had no interest in the slaves and only a lukewarm interest in the trade, and so his contribution in the negotiations was limited to a request for dollars wherewith to pay his soldiers.[63]

Tēwodros' attitude was completely different, as Plowden discovered when he had his first interviews with the King about the treaty and the establishment of the British consulate. Tēwodros admitted that he was ignorant of what Alī had done and "inexperienced in public affairs". Then he put his finger on the one article that was not reciprocal and that might lead to future difficulties, "being only startled by the clause about jurisdiction of Consuls". Tēwodros "feared the clause conferring jurisdiction on the Consul as trenching on his prerogative" and considered "that his own laws and administration of justice should suffice for all strangers; and that a Treaty, if made, should be carried out by himself without the Envoy having judicial powers, though he would not object to an Ambassador to represent the interests of a foreign nation, without those powers." He then postponed the issue with a reference to the fact that he had not found in the history of the institutions of Ethiopia any such thing as a consulate. Plowden had to pocket his disappointment and look at the bright side of the matter:

> I see much to hope for in these conversations. It is well to find a King in Abyssinia proud of his dignity, alive to his responsibility, capable of considering grave matters, and of replying with decision, not lightly giving assent to a thing he does not understand, and yet seeking for our friendship in all ways that he can understand.... Whenever he does sign a Treaty, to whatever effect it may be, he will fully appreciate his obligations, and faithfully fulfil them to the extent of his authority.

The King's counterproposal was that he would send an embassy to England as soon as the rains were over, and not only to England but also to the other "Great European Powers, to treat with them on equal terms".[64]

In these conversations with Plowden Tēwodros had laid down the two main principles of his foreign policy: he would treat "on equal terms" only and he would take the initiative himself to any contacts with foreign powers which might forward his own aims. It was not difficult for Plowden to understand that Tēwodros meant what he said. He seems to have met the envoy selected to go to Russia at Adwa while still travelling inland himself.[65] This could hardly be welcome news to the British Consul and his Government, for England had decided in concert with France to enter the Crimean War on Turkey's side against Russia. Tēwodros would never be able to understand this action. For him Russia and any other Christian power prepared to fight the Turks and liberate Jerusalem were the obvious allies.[66] As for the more immediate questions of stopping the slave trade, protecting Ethiopian merchants at Massawa, and recovering whatever border districts had been occupied by the

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[61] Plowden, *op. cit.*, p. 420. Under the circumstances the treaty was signed as read. See also *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 39, Plowden to Palmerston, 2 Apr. 1850, where the Consul recommends that a ratification be sent to the Ras "to impress him with the reality of the transaction".

[62] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 43 f., Plowden to Palmerston, 4 Apr. 1850.

[63] *Ibid.*, p. 45, Alī to Victoria, no date, forwarded by Plowden, 2 Jan. 1850.

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 148 ff., Plowden to Clarendon, 25 June 1855. See p. 171, Plowden to Clarendon, 5 Aug. 1856, for further information on Tēwodros' attitude towards consuls and other foreign representatives.

[65] *Ibid.*, p. 143 f., Plowden to Clarendon, 7 Apr. 1855; Krapf, *op. cit.*, p. 443 f.

[66] Dufton, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

Egyptians, these were tasks that Tēwodros felt quite capable of dealing with himself at the beginning of his reign.[67]

In 1855 Tēwodros was a man of tremendous power and great promise. He appeared to be the unifier of all Ethiopia. With most of its armed men in the ranks of his armies and a reputation of being invincible, he had more military power at his disposal than any Ethiopian ruler had possessed for several generations. His keen and open mind, his boundless energy and his extraordinary sense of destiny and deep faith in his calling to restore the greatness of Ethiopia combined to make him one of the most remarkable men Ethiopia has produced. However visionary some of his plans and policies might seem, he was resolved to carry them out, and there appeared to be a reasonable chance that he would succeed.

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[67] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, pp. 143 f, 148 ff., Plowden to Clarendon, 7 Apr. and 25 June 1855.

V

THE ROAD TO FAILURE.

There are many ways of approaching the problem of Tēwodros' failure as Emperor of Ethiopia. We know altogether too little about him to be able to strike the correct balance between personal and political factors, between internal and external forces. But one thing is certain: Tēwodros' failure to reach the goals he had set up for himself was not due to sudden setbacks. It was inherent in the very situation and unfolded itself gradually throughout his reign. It was essentially a failure to come to terms with his people, in particular the locally powerful landed aristocracy and the leaders of the Church.

What Tēwodros needed in order to carry out his plans for a centralized government and a modernized national army was finance. He needed it quickly and he needed it to an extent that none of his predecessors had ever done, if he was going to succeed with his reforms and take up the struggle with the Turks. To attempt a heavier taxation of the various provinces through the governors would be dangerous. Some who had strong personal positions in their areas might themselves take the lead of rebellions against the King, others who governed entirely by the will of Tēwodros might find themselves confronted with local rivals with popular support in their provinces.

How weak Tēwodros' hold on the country was became evident already during his first campaign in Wello and Shewa. In his absence Tedla Gwalu of the old ruling family of Gojam raised the standard of rebellion there, and two brothers Niguse and Tesemma, sons of an Agew chief called Welde Mīka'ēl and grandsons of Wibē through their mother, raised an army in Simēn and then marched on Gonder and captured the town.[1] Even Kinfu's son Mekwennin escaped after some fifteen years of imprisonment and joined the opposition against Tēwodros, only to be killed in battle against one of the King's loyal governors.[2] When Tēwodros arrived in Gojam Tedla Gwalu's troops were defeated but the leader escaped to some inaccessible area. Nigusē made no attempt to hold Dembiya and Wegera but retired to Simēn and Tigrē as soon as Tēwodros returned to Gonder.[3]

Back in Gonder Tēwodros decided to put pressure on the clergy to give him the financial means necessary for the upkeep of his army. The Church was comparatively wealthy in land and exempt from various kinds of taxes. Tēwodros saw no reason why this should continue. Zeneb describes a dispute between the King and the priests at Gonder in September 1856 which is revealing and quite characteristic of the time. Tēwodros began by decreeing that no priests were to come before him wearing their *ṭimṭim*, a kind of turban. The priests protested that the *ṭimṭim* was the sign of their honour. The King asked whether they did not uncover their heads when going before the altar, and on their answer that they did so because God dwelt there, he asked, "Does not God dwell in me?" To this the priests said yes, and the King said he had only wanted to teach them good manners but did not care about their wearing their turbans. The priests asked that everything be left as in the days of their fathers. But then Tēwodros raised the important question: "What am I to eat and what am I to give my soldiers to eat? You have taken some [of the land] calling it *ye-mesqel merēt* and some calling it *irīm gedam*."[4] One of the priests replied: "Stay four months in Gonder and eat Armaçheho, Ṣegedē, Welqayit, Simēn, [and] Tigrē; stay four months at Arīngo and eat Bēgēmdir, Lasta, Yeju, Werehīmano, Wello, [and] Shewa; stay four months at Yibaba and eat Meçha, Agew, Damot, [and] Gojam, as [it has been] of yore." The King answered by hinting that his life would be endangered—he might be strangled as Emperor Īyasu—if he was left without the protection of his armies. A *debtera*[5] then observed that David had declared that the King is not saved by the multitude of his soldiers. To this the King replied by two rhetorical questions: "Is not Levi called to the priesthood and Judah to the kingship? What is yours except the tithes?" Then the venerated ancient code the *Fitha Negest* was brought to judge between the King and his men and the Bishop and his priests. The verdict was clear: "What has entered into [the possession of] the Church, shall not be taken out." The dispute ended by Tēwodros suggesting to the clergy that they could place whoever they liked on the throne, for he would go pillaging like the Gallas. This Tēwodros of course had no intention of doing. A reconciliation was arranged. The King's prerogatives with regard to taxation and jurisdiction were acknowledged, but a proclamation was also issued that everything should remain as it had been before.[6]

This was of course no solution. Tēwodros felt that he needed the financial support of the Church. He could not accept the advice to cut down the numbers of his army, at least until he had pacified the country. His proposal was to cut down the numbers of the clergy instead. Each church should have land sufficient to feed two priests and three deacons. The excess land should be given to farmers who paid taxes, and the surplus clergy would have to work for their living and pay taxes as any other men. In 1856 Tēwodros shelved the reform, but four years later he carried it out as far as he could and thereby made the clergy his implacable enemies.[7]

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 148 ff., 157, 161, 162, Plowden to Clarendon, 25 June, 2 Sept., 19 Oct., 26 Nov. and 28 Nov. 1855; Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, pp. 26, 46 f.; *Nuovi documenti*, p. 411. For Agew Nigusē's family background see also *Vicende dell'Etiopia*, p. 465 f. His own story is found in one context in Fusella, *op. cit.*, p. 24 ff.

[2] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 163, Plowden to Clarendon, 8 Feb. 1856.

[3] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 27; *Correspondence 1846—1868*, pp. 166, 171, Plowden to Clarendon, 22 Apr. and 5 Oct. 1856.

[4] These are types of privileged church-land.

[5] The *debteras* are the lay readers and singers in the Ethiopian Church and are usually better educated in all the literature of the Church than the ordinary priests. During the nineteenth century the *debteras* of Gonder had the reputation of being instructed and subtle, but also sly and immoral; see Arnauld d'Abbadie, *op. cit.*, p. 331; Stern, *Wanderings*, p. 308.

[6] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 27 f. Cf. *Nuovi documenti*, p. 412.

The relationship between Tēwodros and Abune Selama was never a very happy one and it became more and more tense. Both were proud and strong-willed men, and in matters dealing with church property and income the King came to share the views of the rulers of northern Europe in the Reformation period, possibly influenced by Bell and Plowden, possibly by the Protestant missionaries.[8]

Moreover, the Bishop was an Egyptian and as such distrusted and despised by Tēwodros.[9] When the Coptic Patriarch Qērlos arrived on a visit to Ethiopia in December 1856 he soon aroused the suspicions of the King still further. The main reason was that the two ecclesiastics drafted a letter to Seyid Pasha, requesting him to send officers, soldiers and various other people to train the Ethiopians, and asked Tēwodros to sign this. However much Tēwodros wanted foreign assistance, he did not want too much of it from a Muslim country. When Qērlos showed interest in reviewing Tēwodros' army the King conceived the idea that the Patriarch was not only an envoy of the Egyptian ruler but a spy, probably a Muslim at heart himself. Both the Patriarch and the Bishop were confined to their house, and the former was threatened that he would not be allowed to leave Ethiopia again. The Ethiopian clergy, however, intervened and a reconciliation took place.[10] In October 1857 there was a new clash between the King and the *Abun*. The latter declared everyone who would follow Tēwodros excommunicated. Tēwodros arrested the *Abun*, but this time the Patriarch solved the crisis by lifting the ban, much against the will of Selama. Soon after Qērlos was allowed to return to Egypt.[11]

As Tēwodros became less and less willing to compromise his reforms, his relations with both Abune Selama and the Ethiopian clergy deteriorated. Relying on the protection of his high office the *Abun* spoke out frankly to the King and incurred his wrath, probably more than any other person.[12] To what extent the *Abun* and the clergy actually played an active rôle in fermenting later rebellions in the country is difficult to say.[13] Certainly the allegations that the King had become a Protestant or a Muslim emanated from them, but these accusations probably only began towards the very end of his reign.[14] In any case the conflict in 1864 went beyond the point of no return. Abune Selama was then imprisoned on Meqdela where he died on October 25, 1867.[15] As for the priests of Gonder they saw their city plundered and burnt in 1864 and then completely devastated in December 1866. With the exception of two or three, all its

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[7] Stern, *Wanderings*, p. 77 f.; Dufton, *op. cit.*, p. 139 ff.; Lejean, *op. cit.*, p. 70. Cf. Welde Maryam, *Tēwodros*, p. 26 ff. This author, himself a man of the Church, is rather more critical of Tēwodros' reforms, but confirms the essential facts except that he presents the taxation of church land as part of a general increase of the tax burden on the people.

[8] Plowden notes at the time of the debate at Gonder that the King was "too much influenced by the Coptic Aboona and priesthood", which is probably an indication of his disappointment at the outcome of the debate, of which he does not give any account; see *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 171 f., Plowden to Clarendon, 5 Oct. 1856.

[9] *Vicende dell'Etiopia*, p. 516 f.

[10] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 29 f.; *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 175 f., Plowden to Clarendon, 15 Jan. and 17 Jan. 1857; Flad, *op. cit.*, I, p. 19 f.

[11] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 31; *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 183, Plowden to Clarendon, 22 Nov. 1857.

[12] Stern, *Captive Missionary*, pp. 151, 165 ff., 222, 338. The character of the Bishop was a topic of much controversy among his contemporaries. According to the Catholic writer Abba Tekle Haymanot, *Vicende dell' Etiopia*, *passim*, he was a slave trader and an adulterer, a Protestant and a great intriguer, but the writer was obviously biased because Selama was largely responsible for the expulsion of the Catholic mission. Several of the Protestant missionaries, however, likewise accused Selama of insincerity and greed; see Flad, *op. cit.*, I, p. 14 f.

[13] Lejean, *op. cit.*, p. 70, alleges that Tēwodros found the hand of the Bishop and the clergy "dans toutes les conspirations et les révoltes subséquentes". In fact, even Stern had more sympathy for Tēwodros than for Abune Selama in his first book and accused the clergy of "sympathy with every rising rebel"; see *Wanderings*, p. 77. It was probably their companionship in suffering that made Stern write so differently about the Bishop in his second book.

[14] Holland and Hozier, *op. cit.*, II, p. 42; Welde Maryam, *Tēwodros*, p. 48.

[15] Welde Maryam, *Tēwodros*, p. 42; Stern, *Captive Missionary*, p. 328.

forty-four churches were pillaged and burnt to the ground. Everything of value: bells, chalices, crosses of gold and silver, and almost one thousand manuscripts were added to the King's treasury.[16]

That Tēwodros failed to find workable solutions in his relationship with the Bishop and the clergy not only deprived him of much needed financial support, but also turned the population in general against him. In spite of all the shortcomings of her servants, the Church had a strong and unique position in the country. In the predominantly Christian population of the regional kingdoms or chieftainships that Tēwodros set out to unify, the authority of the spokesmen of the Church was more wide-spread than any other. The Church was the strongest unifying element in the society both on the local and national level. It was to the churches and the convents that the sick, infirm, and wounded were brought. They were the havens of refuge for chiefs who had lost against their enemies and had to await better days. Although their doctrinal disputes sometimes aggravated a conflict, the clergy usually were the instrument of bringing about any reconciliations that took place.[17] That Tēwodros, in spite of all that he actually shared with the Church in common views and interests, failed to ally himself with this institution, even at the cost of certain concessions, is probably the single most important cause of his failure to unite Ethiopia. Any argument that this would have made it more difficult for him to accommodate his Muslim subjects is invalid, since Tēwodros made no attempts in that direction in any case.

Tēwodros' way to the Throne as well as his failure to win the Church with its wealth and influence over the people for his cause tended to make his power completely dependent on his army. Whatever unification he would accomplish and maintain would be based

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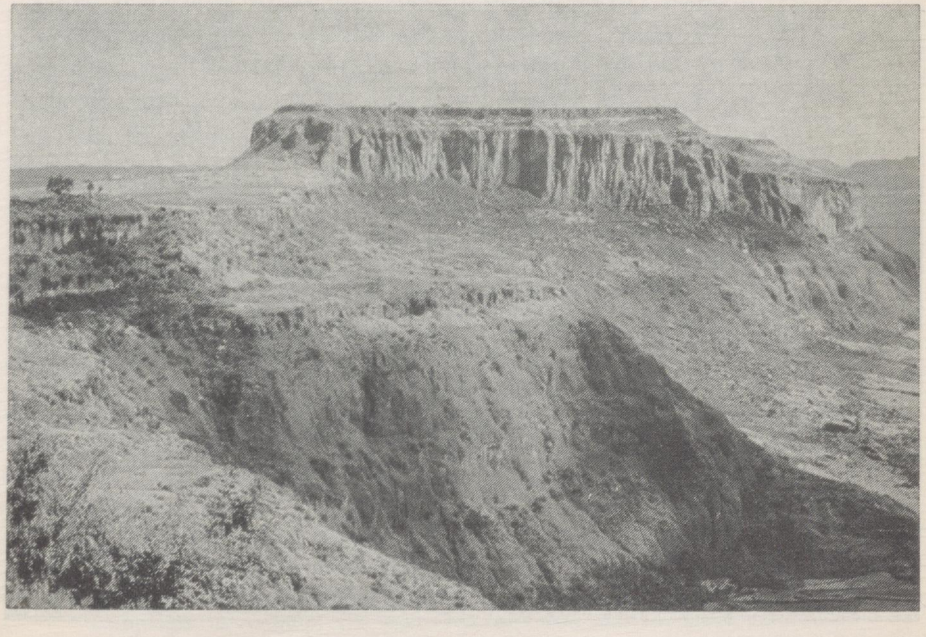
[16] Flad, *op. cit.*, I, p. 70; Welde Maryam, *Tēwodros*, p. 40; *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 560 f., Rassam to Stanley, 10 Jan. 1867; Carlo Conti Rossini, ed., *Epistolario del debterà Aseggachègn di Uadlà*, *Rend. della R. Acc. Naz. dei Lincei*, Ser. VI, I, (1925), pp. 449—490; see letters no. IV and no. VIII.

[17] Although not generally speaking very sympathetic to the clergy, Arnauld d'Abbadie makes this point very clear in his account of the Church; see *op. cit.*, in particular p. 148.

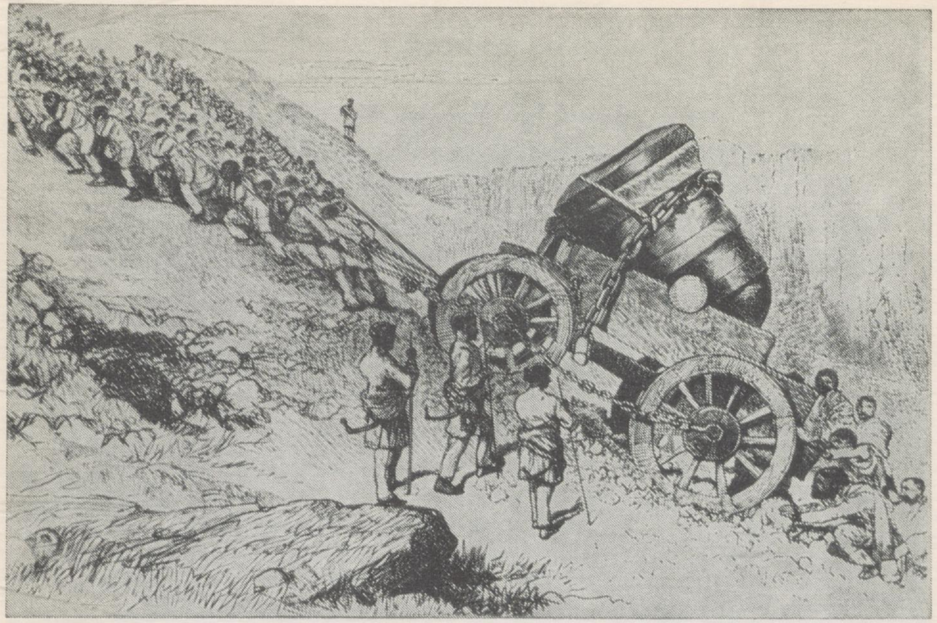
MEQDELA FROM THE SOUTHEAST

Photo by the author



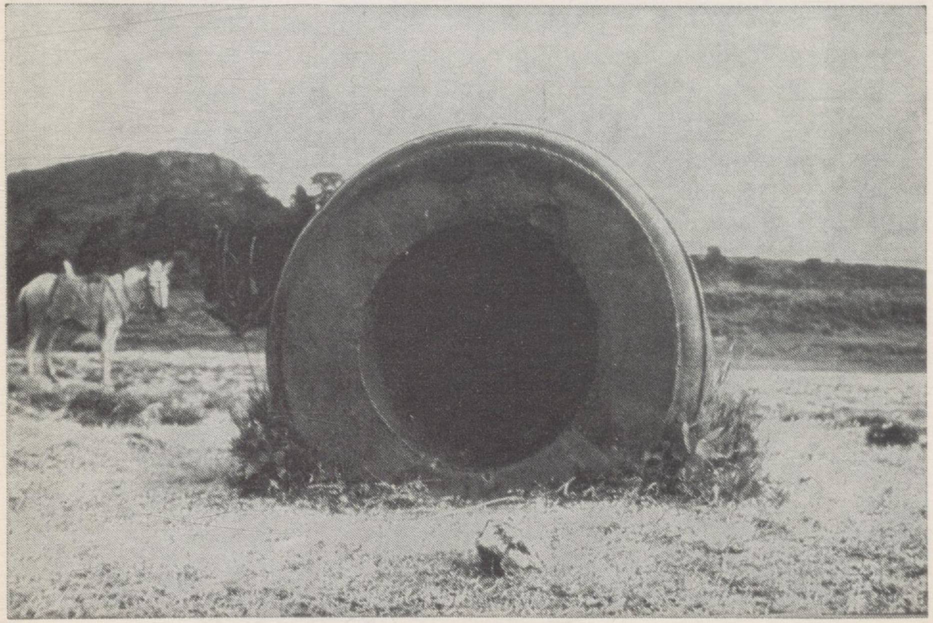
MEQDELA FROM THE NORTH

Photo by D. Korten



THE GREAT MORTAR "SEVASTOPOL"

From Hormuzd Rassam, *Narrative of the Mission to Theodore*



MORTAR AT MEQDELA

Photo by the author

chiefly on the superiority of his military forces to those of his adversaries or rivals.

During the first ten years of his reign at least, Tēwodros' army was superior to those of his adversaries both in numbers and in arms. As for the actual numbers Zeneb only informs us that "the soldiers [of Tēwodros] had become very numerous" in 1858, and that this caused famine in the areas where they campaigned.[18] Foreign observers provide some estimations in figures. Krapf at Debre Tabor in April 1855 reports 40,000 with an expected 20,000—30,000 more from Tigrē and Gojam in view of the Shewa campaign.[19] Two months later Plowden after a visit to the camp of the King in Delanta gives the figure 50,000—60,000 men.[20] This seems to have been a fairly normal figure when Tēwodros took the field in major campaigns. When Padre Leon des Avanchères visited his camp in April 1859, he also reported 60,000 men, and so did Plowden with reference to a campaign at the end of the same year.[21] In the beginning of 1863 Dufton's estimate of the army encamped between Debre Tabor and the Abbay was "possibly...some 50,000 warriors".[22] Three years later when the special British envoy Rassam arrived at the King's camp in Damot, the figures were still much the same. Rassam reports 45,000 men in January and the military member of his mission Lieutenant Prideaux confirms this with the figure 40,000 in June 1866.[23]

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[18] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 35.

[19] Krapf, *op. cit.*, p. 456 f.

[20] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 148 ff., Plowden to Clarendon, 25 June 1855.

[21] Italy, *Atti Parlamentari, Doc. Dipl. 1889—1890, XV, Etiopia*, p. 12 ff., des Avanchères to Cavour, 2 Apr. 1859; *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 193, Plowden to Russell, 3 Feb. 1860.

[22] Dufton, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

[23] Rassam, *op. cit.*, I, p. 274; Markham, *op. cit.*, p. 109. The most important exceptions from these fairly constant figures are the French Consul Lejean's comments that with 50,000 men he did not mean soldiers, of whom the King had only some 7,000—8,000, or in another letter that the King commanded 12,000 men "with a lance, a sabre and a parasol". Lejean visited the same camp as Dufton and accompanied Tēwodros on his campaign in Gojam. He was later arrested and therefore infuriated

Most of the soldiers were armed with spears and shields only, and large numbers of such warriors could be raised, at least temporarily, by Tēwodros' adversaries as well. In fact one Galla army in 1858 was reported to number 50,000. Tēwodros' army was, however, superior, partly thanks to training and experience, partly because Tēwodros in his early battles had captured most of the fire-arms in the country at the time. From Wibē alone, who was the best supplied, he is reported to have captured 7,000 fire-arms in the battle of Deresgē.[24] He also captured a few cannon, two from the Tigreans, three from the Shewans. But Tēwodros was not the man to be satisfied with what he had captured or what could possibly be smuggled past the Turks at Massawa, and so he established his gun-foundry and workshops at Gafat near Debre Tabor. There he put all foreigners who entered the country and who had any suitable skills to work for him with the result that he finally had an artillery force of some 35—40 pieces.[25] In order to be able to move his army quickly from one end of the country to the other Tēwodros pioneered road-making.[26] The construction of carriages for the guns and mortars was also undertaken,[27] but it is quite obvious that the transport of heavy arms would decrease the very mobility which was so essential in the internal warfare against rebel forces, who withdrew to the most inaccessible places whenever threatened by superior forces.

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when he wrote these letters; see A.E., Afrique 61, fols. 396 f., 137 f., Lejean to Drouyn de Lhuys, 21 Mar. 1863, and to anonymous, 8 Mar. 1863, (copy). Much higher estimates also exist but they probably include the camp-followers or are exaggerated for some reason or another. Cf. Richard Pankhurst, "The Ethiopian Army of Former Times", *Ethiopia Observer*, VII, 2, 1963, pp. 118—142.

[24] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 186, Plowden to Clarendon, 5 July 1858; Krapf, *op. cit.*, p. 440; Stern, *Wanderings*, p. 75. Cf. Richard Pankhurst, "Fire-Arms in Ethiopian History (1800—1935)", *Ethiopia Observer*, VI, 2, 1962, pp. 135—180.

[25] See Pankhurst, "Fire-Arms", p. 140 ff.

[26] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 189 f., Plowden to Malmesbury, 1 Mar. 1859. See also Richard Pankhurst, "Misoneism and Innovation in Ethiopian History", *Ethiopia Observer*, VII, 4, 1964, pp. 287—320.

[27] See Pankhurst, "Misoneism", p. 295.

How strong the resistance to Tēwodros' unification and centralization policy was, is evident from the way he spent most of his reign, in the field against rebels and rivals. While he subdued Shewa, the north had rebelled under Agew Nigusē, and Plowden's optimistic assertion in August 1856 that "one more battle will decide between anarchy and order—between a vigorous monarchy, or a feudal oligarchy and consequent barbarism", turned out to be wishful thinking.[28]

Instead of marching against Agew Nigusē, the King in February 1857 turned again to the provinces of Yeju, Wello and Were Hīmano, where his own governor on Meqdela, Dejazmach Līben, and a chief named Amedē Beshīr had risen in rebellion. The Galla chiefs fled. Tēwodros recaptured Meqdela "without firing a shot" and appointed among others one of his closest associates, Grazmach Alemē, governor there. He placed other officers from his army in other natural fortresses such as Amba Gishen. With head-quarters in the district of Wadla Tēwodros tried to pacify the neighbouring Galla countries throughout the year of 1857. He crossed the area in all directions and defeated Amedē Beshīr and Līben without, however, catching them. The fact that Merdazmach Hayle Mīka'ēl in Shewa remained loyal and sent the taxes of his province to Tēwodros in Yeju was probably the bright point of that year.[29]

In November 1857 Tēwodros was concentrating his forces at Debre Tabor for a campaign in Gojam, which his governors there had failed to pacify. Tēwodros' first appointee there, and one of his most loyal officers, Ras Ingida, was actually in disgrace and in prison at the time. In a swift campaign Tēwodros defeated the rebels, caught some of the leaders, but not Tedla Gwalu himself, and executed them because they had already been pardoned once. The Gojam campaign was followed by one to Lasta in March 1858. The governor there, Wag-shum Gebre Medhin, had hereditary rights to the province. Taken prisoner by Tēwodros in the battle of Ayshal he had been released and sent to his country as governor in 1856. But he had gone over to Agew Nigusē and was now in March 1858 defeated and caught by the King, who hanged him together with eight other rebel chiefs. In the meantime Agew Tesemma had invaded Wegera from the north. The King soon chased him back to Tigrē, where Nigusē remained without taking the field against Tēwodros.[30]

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[28] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 171, Plowden to Clarendon, 5 Aug. 1856.

[29] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 30 f.; *Correspondence 1846—1868*, pp. 179 ff., 182, 184, Plowden to Clarendon, 2 Apr., 20 May and 7 Sept. 1857, Tēwodros to Victoria, no date, enclosed in Plowden to Clarendon, 25 Nov. 1857.

It must by now have become quite obvious to Tēwodros that he had to post larger detachments of soldiers also in the provinces where he was not present himself and arrange generally for the upkeep of his army. The system used was to make the peasantry reponsible for the feeding of a number of soldiers district by district. In April and May 1858 this system was imposed on the provinces west, north, and east of lake Ṭana, *i.e.*, from Alefa to Bēgēmdir and as far north as Wegera. It was introduced further east in Wadla and Delanta later.[31]

Then conditions in Wello again called for Tēwodros' presence there. Amedē Beshīr had collected a big force of cavalry. He was defeated in several battles but always escaped, and this time Tēwodros allowed his soldiers to pillage the countryside wherever the farmers were suspected of hiding the rebels, but ordered that the lives of the people, including prisoners taken fighting, should be spared. Because of the size of the forces involved on both sides, famine broke out in the area. It was certainly one of Tēwodros' worst campaigns, during which the King also suffered a great personal loss. His wife Itēgē Tewabech, who had accompanied him in the field so many years, fell ill and died on August 19.[32]

In September Tēwodros made a quick expedition to Gonder to chase away a rebel force from the capital but immediately returned to continue the campaign against Amedē Beshīr and his

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[30] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 184 f., Plowden to Clarendon, 5 June 1858; Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 31 ff.; for Ras Ingida's position in particular, see pp. 26, 29, 30.

[31] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, pp. 33 f., 36.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 35 f.; *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 186, Plowden to Clarendon, 5 July 1858.

followers. This occupied almost all his time for a full year, that is until October 1859. Amedē Beshīr managed to keep out of reach himself, but the population of Wello suffered badly. There was no longer any question of sparing the cattle of the farmers, instead the soldiers "used meat as if it were cabbage", and soon the lives of the people became very cheap too. As Tēwodros became more and more exasperated at the incessant uprisings whenever he turned his back, the reprisals became worse, and finally mutilations of hundreds of captives took place.[33] Zeneb who reports these events in considerable detail (*e.g.*, the cutting of both hands of 787 men on one occasion) defends the King's actions by stating that he had returned seven times, declared amnesties and even pleaded with the people to lay down their arms.[34] There were additional frustrations such as unexpected desertions. When Grazmach Alemē deserted from Meqdela in May, Tēwodros is reported to have exclaimed, "If Grazmach Alemē deserts me, then whom do I trust?"[35] But Tēwodros still seemed confident of his ultimate success, provided death did not intervene. Plowden reports that he said in a discussion at this time:

> Providence...wills that some delay should interpose between my coronation and my perfect success. I cannot just now abandon my people to the fierce Gallas, nor can I tell the hour and the moment when he shall please to permit me to march against Negoosee, but nothing save my death shall prevent me from placing you in safety at Massowah by that road; neither you nor I can control the will of God, and death ends all ties.[36]

During the first three years of Tēwodros' reign Hayle Mīka'ēl was a loyal governor of Shewa. In the end of 1858 he was suspected, probably of contacts with Amedē Beshīr, probably of unwillingness or inability to deal with a budding revolt led by his own brother Seyfu in eastern Shewa. He was replaced by his brother-in-law Abboyē and another man from the household of Sahle Sillasē named Bezabih. Seyfu's rebellion nevertheless spread, and when he captured Ankober in October 1859, Tēwodros went by forced marches to Shewa to meet him. After a day's hard fighting, Tēwodros defeated Seyfu's army. Seyfu retreated eastwards into Galla country, and Tēwodros handed over the province to his appointed governors before he hurried north again.[37]

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[33] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, pp. 36 f., 40 ff.; *Correspondence 1846—1868*, pp. 187, 188 f., 190, 191, 192, Plowden to Malmesbury, 20 Nov. 1858, 1 Feb., 10 Mar., 18 June, 20 Sept. 1859.

[34] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 45.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

[36] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 188 f., Plowden to Malmesbury, 1 Feb. 1859.

It was only after the expedition to Shewa that Tēwodros finally decided to deal with Agew Nigusē in Tigrē. The King had appointed people from the highest families in Tigrē as governors there, but the only one who had shown himself willing or capable of holding at least part of his governorship for Tēwodros was Kasa Sebagadis. The rebels Nigusē and Tesemma dominated the situation in northern Ethiopia more and more.[38] At the instigation or on the advice of the Catholic missionaries who remained in northern Ethiopia, Nigusē had approached Napoleon III for French recognition and support, and a French mission under Count Stanislas Russel was sent in 1859 to see what could be done in favour of French and Catholic interests by supporting Tēwodros' rival.[39] It was probably the news about Russel's mission that caused Tēwodros to attack when he did. Nigusē's army was no match for Tēwodros. Many deserted their chiefs and when the King reached Adwa about the

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[37] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, pp. 38, 46; Guèbrè Sellassié, *op. cit.*, I, p. 93 ff; *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 193, Plowden to Russell, 2 Feb. 1860.

[38] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, p. 33; Welde Maryam, *Tēwodros*, p. 7; *Correspondence 1846—1868*, pp. 147, 169 f., 171, 184 f., Plowden to Clarendon, 8 Mar. 1855, 23 June and 5 Oct. 1856, 5 June 1858.

[39] Lejean, *op. cit.*, p. 88 ff. For more detailed information, see Stanislas Russel, *Une mission en Abyssinie et dans la Mer Ruge, 23 oct. 1859—7 mai 1860* (Paris, 1884), and A.E., Correspondance politique, Egypte, Massouah 2 and 3, which contain a number of important documents on how the missionaries and the French Consul at Massawa viewed Tēwodros' reign and how the contacts between Nigusē and France were established. Nigusē's own letters to Napoleon, Massouah 2, fols. 107 and 333, are dated 9 June 1856 and 1 Nov. 1859.

middle of January 1860, Nigusē and his brother fled to the Mereb valley.[40]

One of the consequences of Tēwodros' march to Tigrē and Nigusē's flight was that Plowden decided to leave for Tigrē and meet with Tēwodros before returning to England. Just outside Gonder he was attacked and mortally wounded by a small rebel army under Nigusē's ally Gared, a remaining son of Kinfu.[41] The Gallas of Wello were still restless, which caused an expedition in that direction during the rainy season of 1860.[42] And then the King was off again, after one week's rest at Debre Tabor, to fight Tesemma and Gared, who were reported to have collected forces in Wegera. The rebels withdrew into the lowlands of Waldibba, but there Tēwodros avenged the death of the British Consul on Gared at the cost of losing his friend Bell. A number of captives were executed after the battle.[43] In Tēwodros' own words to Queen Victoria: "But by the power of God I have exterminated those enemies, not leaving one alive though they are of my own family that I may get by the power of God, your friendship."[44] In January 1861 the forces of Nigusē and Tesemma were also defeated, and this time the chiefs were caught and executed near Aksum together with a number of other rebel leaders.[45]

The two or three years following Tēwodros' final victory over Nigusē mark the climax of his career from the point of view of military control over his country. But the means he had resorted to in order to gain this control, had failed to quell the spirit of independence or rebellion of the various provinces, and some of his adversaries were still at large. There were still outbreaks of insurrection among the Wello Gallas which called for the King's presence there,[46] and Tedla Gwalu had increased the areas under his control. In order to stop this and if possible rid himself of this rebel who had defied his authority for more than seven years, Tēwodros concentrated strong forces in Gojam in early 1863. In one of the most bloody battles of his reign he defeated the insurgents at Injabara, but once again Tedla Gwalu escaped, and although he had suffered great losses in the battle, he still remained very powerful.[47]

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[40] A. E., Corr. pol., Massouah 3, fols. 9, 15 f., 24 f., Gilbert to Walewski, 25 Jan. and 5 Feb. 1860, Gilbert to Thouvenel, 26 Mar. 1860; *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 193, Plowden to Russell, 3 Feb. 1860.

[41] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, pp. 197, 193 f., Schimper to Barroni, 19 Mar. 1860, Barroni to Colquhoun, 30 Mar. 1860, with inclosure from Plowden's companions.

[42] Stern, *Wanderings*, p. 145 f.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 148; Lejean, *op. cit.*, p. 106 f.; *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 218 ff., Cameron to Russell, 31 Oct. 1862.

[44] F.O. 95/721, Tēwodros to Victoria, 29 Oct. 1862. For printed English text, see *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 224 f.

[45] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 200, Colquhoun to Russell, 28 Feb. 1861, with enclosed letter from Tēwodros to Barroni; Dufton, *op. cit.*, p. 153 f.

At about this time Bezabih declared the independence of Shewa and took the title of King, which was a serious blow, since Shewa had, together with Bēgēmdir, normally been loyal to Tēwodros.[48] The King delayed his attack on Bezabih until the end of the year and returned from Menz without having subdued Shewa or caught Bezabih.[49]

The year 1864 brought further mortifications for Tēwodros. In Welqayit a chief called Ţiso Gobazē raised the standard of rebellion and by the end of the year all the territory between Lake Ţana and the Tekkezē including the old capital Gonder had fallen into his hands. The King had in a sense prepared the way for him by pillaging Dembiya and Gonder in 1864. In Lasta the opposition flocked to the banner of Wag-shum Gebre Medhin's son Gobazē, and it was already foreseen that one of these two would also occupy Tigrē.[50]

With Tedla Gwalu holding out in Gojam and Bezabih in power in Shewa, Tēwodros was by 1865 completely encircled by rebel forces, and controlled only Bēgēmdir, Wadla, Delanta and some other minor areas. He made an attempt to regain Shewa in the beginning of 1865 but was defeated,[51] and when Minīlik escaped from Meqdela during the night between June 30 and July 1 that year, the control of Shewa became a matter between him and Bezabih.[52] After April 1865 there is no evidence that Tēwodros ventured south of Meqdela. On the contrary there are reports that the King was actually trying to find a non-violent solution to his conflict with the Gallas, but it was too late.[53] The Emperor's European captives clearly saw what was happening. Flad wrote from Gafat on March 30, 1865, "The whole country is in a most disturbed condition, rebels rising everywhere", and Cameron stated from Meqdela a week later, "... the country is on the eve of dissolution".[54]

Although Tēwodros kept up the size of his army at least until the middle of 1866, he limited his activities to the areas between Meqdela and Debre Tabor and the immediate neighbourhood of Lake Ţana. But the upkeep of the army was too heavy a burden for this limited area, which was, besides, the home country of most of the soldiers. Tēwodros tried in every possible way to hold to this instrument of power, for he knew well that he had no other, but by the beginning of 1867 there is clear evidence that his army was disintegrating. Desertions became more and more frequent, and by middle 1867 his whole army consisted of no more than some 10,000 men. Several of the rebel chiefs had larger armies at their disposal.[55]

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[46] *Mittheilungen aus Justus Perthes' Geographischer Anstalt*, 1862, pp. 25, 105—07, 424—26, letters from Theodor von Heuglin, 19 Oct. and 7 Nov. 1861, 12 May and 13 May 1862; Flad, *op. cit.*, I, p. 51 f.

[47] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, pp. 246, 259 f., Colquhoun to Russell, 30 Sept. 1863, quoting a letter from Stern to him dated 21 Apr., Cameron to Russell, 15 Aug. 1863; Dufton, *op. cit.*, p. 184 f.; Lejean, *op. cit.*, p. 142 ff.; Rassam, *op. cit.*, I, p. 238.

[48] A.E., Mémoires et documents, Afrique 61, fols. 130 ff., 139, Lejean to Drouyn de Lhuys, 28 Jan. 1863, and Bezabih to Gebre Hiywet, no date, enclosed in Lejean to anonymous, 8 Mar. 1863.

[49] Stern, *Captive Missionary*, p. 214 ff.; Guèbrè Sellassié, *op. cit.*, I, p. 97 f.

[50] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, pp. 302 ff., 345 ff., Colquhoun to Russell, 27 Jan. 1865, Rassam to Merewether, 12 May 1865; Flad, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 70, 82.

[51] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, pp. 403, 345 f., Cameron to Hertslet, 28 Jan. 1865, Rassam to Merewether, 12 May 1865.

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 402 f., Cameron to Shaw, 14 July 1865; Guèbrè Sellassié, *op.cit.*, I, pp. 99, 103 ff.

[53] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 402 f., Cameron to Shaw, 14 July 1865.

[54] *Ibid*, pp. 347 f., 350 f., Flad to Rassam, 30 Mar. 1865, Cameron to Rassam 6 Apr. 1865.

Colonel Merewether, who followed events within the country from Aden and Massawa and did his best to obtain reliable information on the strength of Tēwodros and his rivals, wrote in January 1867:

> From what Mr. Rassam writes and from all I have been able to gather from merchants and others…it is clear that the Emperor's position is becoming most desperate, that his power is rapidly diminishing, and that unless he can manage to make some brilliant stroke worthy of his earlier career, his rule will come to an end within the next few months.[56]

While there is reason to suspect a certain amount of wishful thinking by the King's European captives behind such estimations of Tēwodros' position as this, there is also much evidence that Bēgēmdir was beginning to slip from Tēwodros' grasp in 1867. Because of rebel activities it was even difficult at times for the King to keep the road open between his capital Debre Tabor and his main fortress Meqdela.[57]

After the rains of 1867 Tēwodros burnt Debre Tabor, took with him all the new guns and mortars, to which he had devoted so much of his thought during the last difficult years, and blasted a road to Meqdela, both literally and figuratively, for himself and the remainder of his once invincible army. Because of the road-construction for the heavy mortars, it took him nearly six months to make that five days' journey. And when he arrived at Meqdela on March 27, 1868, his remaining kingdom consisted of the fortress and a few adjoining peaks.[58] There he might have held out for years against his countrymen as Tedla Gwalu and Biru Goshu had held out against superior forces on their *ambas* in Gojam. But it is highly unlikely, for he did not have their advantage of defending himself in his own inherited province. In any case it would hardly have made any difference to the unification of Ethiopia. With regard to that, Tēwodros had reached the bitter end. There is no reason to believe that his countrymen would have given him a chance to make a fresh start. To all their resistance against his plans for a unitary state, he had answered with increased use of force, and it did not work. He knew that he had lost and he knew the reason:

> My countrymen have turned their backs on me, and have hated me, because I imposed tribute on them, and sought to bring them under military discipline.[59]

It remains only to answer or at least ask what rôle the foreigners, of whom so much has been written, played in Tēwodros' failure to fulfil the promises and carry out the policies of 1855. The first thing to take note of is that Ethiopia's foreign relations during the reign of Tēwodros developed quite differently from what was expected. Tēwodros expected that the Egyptians would attack him, either to gain territory or simply to support the cause of Islam in Ethiopia. The Europeans expected Tēwodros to go to war with Egypt or Turkey, either on boundary issues or to gain Massawa or simply as a consequence of the crusading element in Tēwodros' personality and outlook. What happened was that the Patriarch, in spite of all, managed to allay Tēwodros' fear of an immediate attack, and the King therefore sent two envoys to Egypt with the Patriarch to hand over some gifts and a friendly letter, in which he particularly stresses how pleased he is to hear that Seyid makes Muslims and Christians live together properly in peace.[60] The Egyptian ruler answered with a mission in 1859 that brought Tēwodros four cannon, which was evidence enough that Egypt had no plan of attacking Ethiopia at that time.[61]

The disappearance of Agew Nigusē brought Tēwodros face to face with Turkish expansion on the Red Sea coast, and Plowden's successor Cameron regarded it as a "matter of certainty" that the

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[55] *Ibid.*, pp. 547 ff., 625 ff., 715 ff., Merewether to Stanley, 15 Jan. and 1 May 1867, Abbot to Stanley, 6 Sept. 1867.

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 547 ff., Merewether to Stanley, 15 Jan. 1867.

[57] *Ibid.*, pp. 622 ff., 680 ff., Merewether to Stanley, 29 Apr. and 11 July 1867.

[58] Flad, *op. cit.*, II, p. 48 ff.; Rassam, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 255 ff., 279.

[59] Holland and Hozier, *op. cit.*, II, p. 42.

[60] Abdine Archives, Cairo, Bahr Berra, Carton 19, Tēwodros to Seyid, 13 Nov. 1857; *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 183, Plowden to Clarendon, 22 Nov. 1857.

[61] Zeneb, *Tēwodros*, pp. 39 f., 42; *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 189, Plowden to Malmesbury, 2 Feb. 1859.

King would "sooner or later" overrun the Turkish possessions on the coast.[62] Egyptian activities on the Red Sea Coast as well as on the western frontier, which Tēwodros knew so well, in combination with the relative internal security he had gained in 1862, made the King think that the time had come to act. To Consul Cameron he said "...that his empire and religion were in danger of being crushed, and that he would fight to death in their defence". But aware that the European powers did not necessarily view hostilities against Turkey with approval, Tēwodros "announced his intention of... sending Ambassadors to the European nations to justify his conduct" and assured Cameron "that he would not make or bring on war until he had made an appeal to all Christendom".[63]

On October 29, 1862, letters were prepared to Queen Victoria and Napoleon III and handed to Cameron and a French adventurer named Bardel with instructions that they should go at once and bring back answers from their sovereigns. In these letters, of which the wording is almost identical, Tēwodros complained of the encroachments of the Turks on the land of his ancestors and of their preventing free access for Ethiopia to the outside world. He did not propose any actual alliance, but there was an implicit appeal for assistance, at least moral support, in the letters. Tēwodros also informed the two sovereigns that he intended to send embassies to their courts and asked them to arrange for their safe travel through Turkish territory.[64] Letters were also sent to Russia, Austria and Prussia.[65]

Whether influenced by British or French representations or by other considerations, the Egyptian ruler recalled the Egyptian troops from Metemma.[66] Tēwodros turned again to the problems of consolidating his power in Ethiopia. The Egyptian question had to be

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62. *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 209, Cameron to Russell, 20 Mar. 1862.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 218 ff., Cameron to Russell, 31 Oct. 1862; Dufton, *op. cit.*, p. 185.
64. F.O. 95/721, Tēwodros to Victoria, 29 Oct. 1862; A.E., Mémoires et documents, Afrique 61, fol. 105, Tēwodros to Napoleon III, 29 Oct. 1862.
65. *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 218 ff., Cameron to Russell, 31 Oct. 1862.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 259 f., Cameron to Russell, 15 Aug. 1863; Dufton, *op. cit.*, p. 185 f.

put off, until Tēwodros' successor Yohannis under more favourable circumstances could give it his attention in the eighteen-seventies, approaching it in much the same way as Tēwodros had done. The indifference shown by the European governments towards Tēwodros' appeal, combined with the imprudence and mutual intrigues of some of the foreigners in Ethiopia, quickly put an end to the King's earlier confidence in, and liking for, Europeans. He would still show some consideration for those who served him by hard work, but generally speaking the pound was wasted.

What happened was briefly the following. The French Consul Lejean arrived from Massawa around New Year 1863 with the aim of disassociating the French Government from the policy of his predecessor and trying to counteract the British influence. This was in itself not an easy task, and he complicated it by expressing disparaging views of Bardel, whom the Emperor had chosen to carry his message to Napolean III and by *demanding* leave to return to Massawa when Tēwodros wanted him to stay until Bardel returned. He was detained until Bardel arrived in September 1863, but then dismissed. The reply brought by Bardel was in Tēwodros' eyes most unsatisfactory, both in form and content. Napoleon had not answered personally under his own seal, "but through a servant". The letter contained no reference to the menace of Islam or the Turks, but instead pointed out that Napoleon was the protector of all Catholic missionaries throughout the world, which Tēwodros could not help but feel as a reprimand.[67]

Cameron had returned before Bardel with no reply at all, but had assured the King that it would soon arrive. Tēwodros began to suspect that his colleagues in Europe did not take him seriously. This was followed by the arrest of the missionary Stern, who was on his way to the coast, and the search of his papers for disparaging comments about the Emperor. Bardel was somehow involved in this search, most likely in an attempt to improve his own position

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67. A.E., Mémoires et documents, Afrique 61, fol. 396 f., Lejean to Drouyn de Lhuys, 21 Mar. 1863; *Correspondence 1846—1868*, pp. 259, 250 ff., Cameron to Russell, 1 July and 2 Oct. 1863, Drouyn de Lhuys to Tēwodros, 24 Mar. 1863.

or because he wanted to hurt the Protestant cause. Offensive material, *i.a.*, on the parents of Tēwodros , was found, and Stern and his colleague Rosenthal were chained. Cameron made some unsuccessful attempts to intervene, but the King silenced him by asking him where the British reply to his letter to the Queen was.[68]

Towards the end of November a courier arrived from England. There was a brief letter recalling Cameron to his post in Massawa but not a word for the King.[69] Tēwodros was enraged and chained Cameron and his staff. The Consul smuggled out a note with the information, "No release until civil answer to King's letter arrives".[70]

When this news reached London it caused some consternation. It was soon discovered that a letter from Tēwodros had arrived in February, 1863, but had been put aside unanswered. This may have been due to pure carelessness, but it is just as likely that Tēwodros was correct in his suspicions, and that the Foreign Secretary Lord Russell was of the opinion that the Queen should not condescend to write to Tēwodros. When he was called upon to explain the Consul's imprisonment to the Queen Lord Russell wrote:

> The King of Abyssinia wished to be invited to come to this country, and to be assisted against the French; and, as these requests could not be complied with, he imprisoned the Consul and the missionaries.[71]

This was to say the least a misstatement of facts, for all Tēwodros had asked for, was that representatives for his country should be allowed to come to England and be well received, as he had him-

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[68] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 255 ff., Haussmann to Petherick, 4 Jan. 1864; Stern, *Captive Missionary*, pp. 44 ff., 141 f.

[69] Flad, *op. cit.*, I, p. 69; *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 229, Russell to Cameron, 22 Apr. 1863.

[70] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 262 f., Cameron to Speedy, 14 Feb. 1863; cf. Stern, *Captive Missionary*, p. 123; Rassam, *op. cit.*, I, p. 299 ff.

[71] *Letters of Queen Victoria, 1862—1878*, ed., G.H. Buckle (London, 1926), second series, I, p. 249, Russell to Victoria, 5 Feb. 1865. It is probably the fact that the content of the letter was for some time kept secret, that gave rise to the fantastic rumour that Tēwodros had asked for Queen Victoria's hand in marriage, a romantic idea that spread to Ethiopia where it has survived until this day.

self received Plowden and Cameron, and that the British should sympathize with him in his impending war with the Turks. Secondly, it was not a negative reply but the failure of Cameron to deliver the letter in person, the nonexistence of a reply, and the recall of the British Consul that caused the detainment and imprisonment.[72] In the circumstances this amounted to the "breaking off of diplomatic relations" and Tēwodros can hardly be blamed if he suspected that the British and French actually contemplated siding with the Turks against him, as they had done against Russia in the Crimean War. Nor was Tēwodros prepared to see all his hopes of civilizing Ethiopia with European assistance come to naught, and when he saw no other way to ensure this he used force, as he did with his own countrymen.

Tēwodros gained some initial satisfaction by detaining the Consul. The Queen wrote a friendly letter and appointed a special envoy Hormuzd Rassam to take it to Ethiopia.[73] For various reasons it took almost one and a half years before Rassam entered Ethiopia via Metemma and finally reached Tēwodros' camp in Agewmidir in January 1866. He was received with remarkable courtesy and the prisoners were all sent for to be handed over to him.[74]

Tēwodros agreed to forgive them and let them go, but he also brought up the question of some kind of satisfaction as part of the conciliation. He believed that Rassam was empowered to grant him material proof of England's goodwill, for the last sentence of the Queen's letter, "...give entire credit to all that he shall say to you on Our part, as well as comply with the requests which he is instructed to make to you ..." was translated to him, "... consult with him concerning what you require of us, and he will do it for you...". No one dared to explain the mistranslation to Tēwodros, and on the very day set for the departure of the group of former captives together with Rassam, they were all arrested.[75] Instead Flad was sent to England to recruit a gun-smith, a founder, an instructor for artillery, necessary tools, some ammunition, etc. Tēwodros himself wrote a letter which concluded: "We, the people of Ethiopia, are blind; enlighten us; and may God give you light in heaven."[76]

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[72] Rassam, *op. cit.*, I, p. 249.

[73] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 309 f., Victoria to Tēwodros, 26 May 1864. Note that the letter was actually rewritten in February 1865, without the date being changed; see *loc. cit.*, Layard to Rassam, 17 Feb. 1865. For the first version, see p. 270 f. There the Queen, albeit politely, declined the idea of Tēwodros sending any mission to England but in the second version she accepted it, once Cameron and the other Europeans would have been permitted to leave Ethiopia.

[74] Rassam, *op. cit.*, I, p. 243 ff.; *Correspondence 1846—1868*, pp. 450, 455 ff., Merewether to Clarendon, 28 Mar. and 12 May 1866.

Although the British Government decided to try this way out and actually shipped both people and equipment as far as Massawa, they also sent a strong letter to the King and instructed Flad to tell him verbally that the British would send an army to release the captives if he did not let them go.[77] By the time Flad reached the King's camp in April 1867, the situation was such that Tēwodros did not seem to care. Flad had to join those Europeans who under surveillance worked in the gun-foundry at Gafat, casting ever larger mortars.[78]

Reluctantly the British Government decided to send a military force into Ethiopia. At the cost of £9,000,000 a British-Indian army of 32,000 men under Sir Robert Napier was shipped to Ethiopia to carry out the task of releasing the captives. Tēwodros made no attempt whatsoever to block their way or harass their lines of communication. He had reached Meqdela about two weeks before the British arrived. On the plain of Arogē just below the fortress the only battle of the campaign took place on Good Friday, April 10, 1868. It was Tēwodros' army that attacked under the command of the Emperor's old general Gebrē. Tēwodros stayed with his cannon at Fala, a saddle between Meqdela and some other peaks. The artillery fire had little effect, and when the Ethiopians came within range

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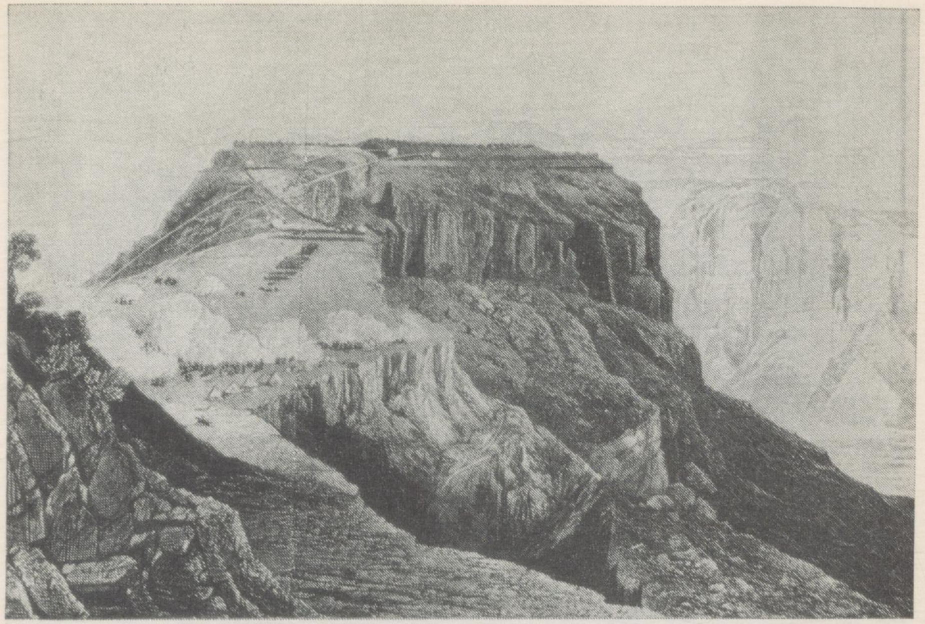
[75] Rassam, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 31 ff., 82 ff.

[76] *Ibid.*, II, p. 100 ff.; F.O. 95/725, no. 226, Tēwodros to Victoria, 17 Apr. 1866.

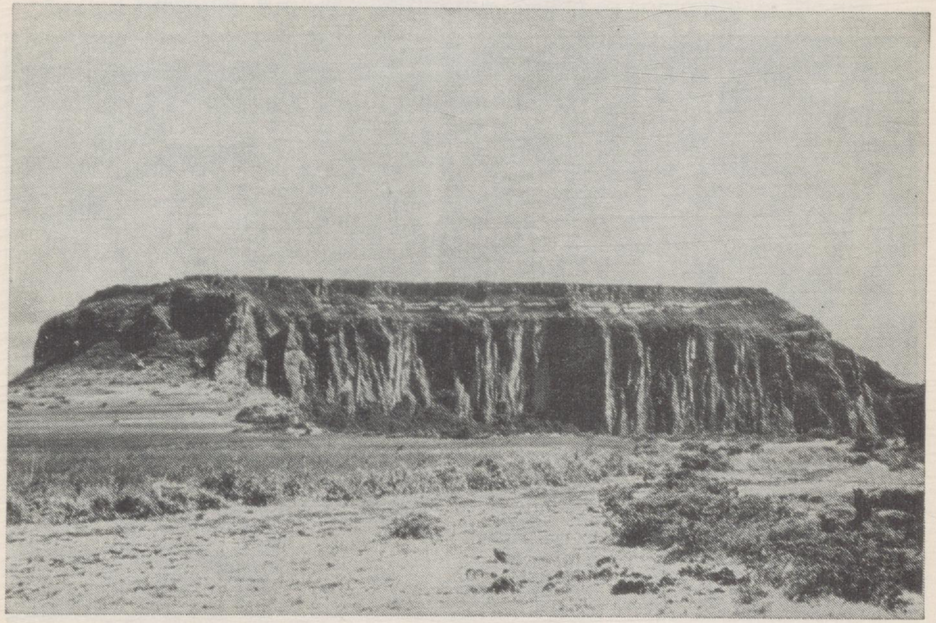
[77] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, pp. 491 ff., 496, 513 ff., Memorandum by Merewether, 16 Aug. 1866, Murray to the Secretary to the Treasury, 18 Aug. 1866, Merewether to Murray, 1 Oct. 1866, Victoria to Tēwodros, 4 Oct. 1866; Flad, *op. cit.*, II, p. 37 f.

[78] Flad, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 39, 48.



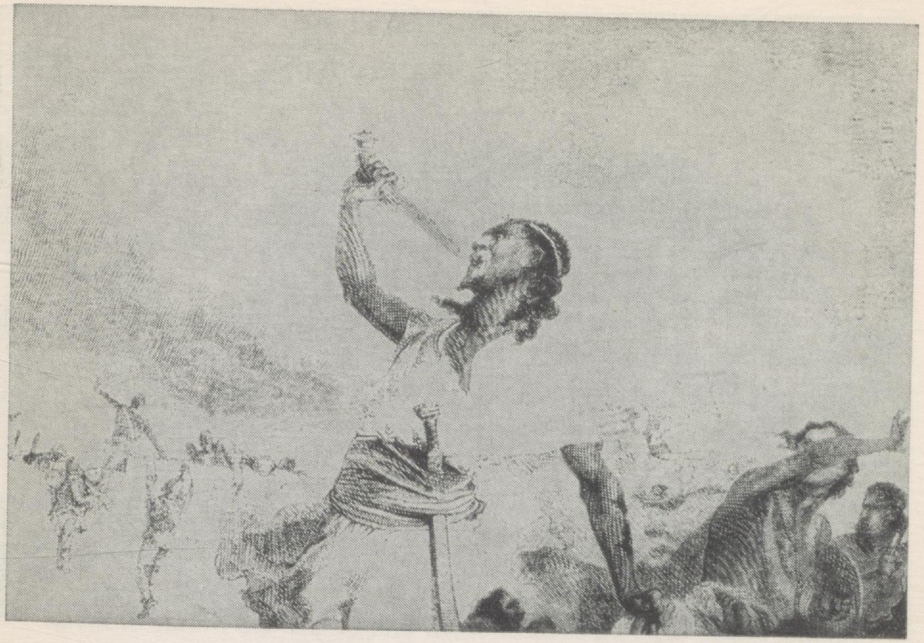
THE STORMING OF MEQDELA IN 1868

From Hormuzd Rassam, *Narrative of the British Mission to Theodore*



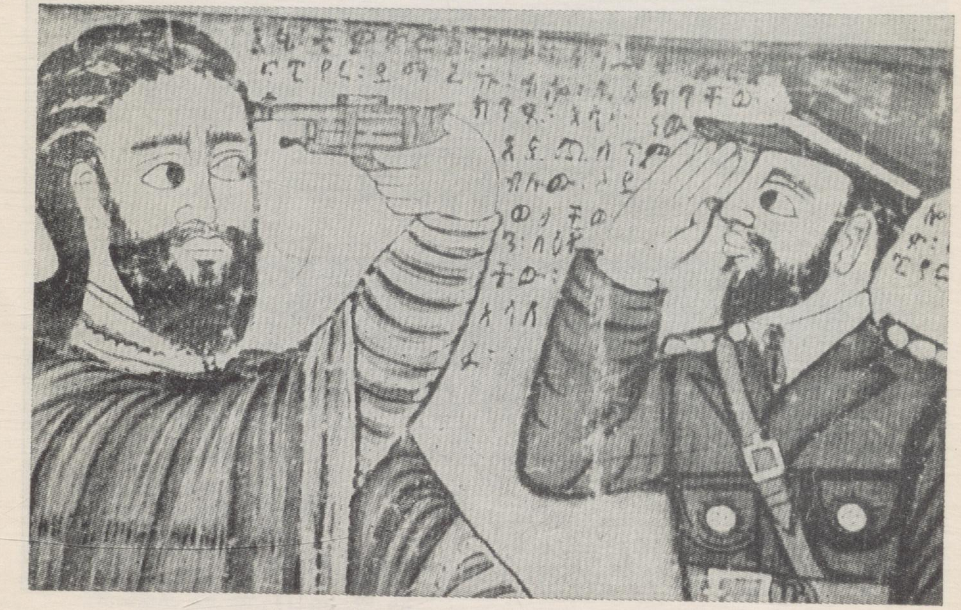
MEQDELA TODAY

Photo by the author



DESPAIR AND DEFIANCE
AS ENVISAGED BY A FOREIGNER AT MEQDELA

From Henry A. Blanc, *I prigionieri di Teodoro e la campagna inglese d'Abissinia*



A SOLEMN DEPARTURE
AS ENVISAGED BY AN ETHIOPIAN ARTIST

Photo: Institute of Ethiopian Studies

of the very effective British fire, they were mown down. Of some 4,000 Ethiopians engaged in the battle, 700—800 were killed and twice that number were wounded. The British had about 2,000 engaged in the battle. Of these twenty were wounded, two of them mortally. On Saturday Tēwodros released the European prisoners, and on Sunday all the other missionaries and the artisans were allowed to leave for the British camp. On Easter Monday the fortress was stormed. Tēwodros had dismissed the remains of his army, and just before the first British soldiers reached him he shot himself.[79]

Thus the fall of Meqdela by foreign guns and the death of Tēwodros by his own hand coincided. But it would be a mistake to believe that the second was really caused by the first. As some foreigners had played a rôle when Tēwodros set his goals for a modern Ethiopian state, so they played their part in his downfall by causing unnecessary misunderstandings, frustrations, and rash actions, which Tēwodros himself no doubt regretted. But in neither case was it the major rôle. The British came to Meqdela armed as if they had expected to meet the "invincible" Tēwodros at the head of a united Ethiopia. But long before they began to contemplate the use of military force against him, Tēwodros had lost his Kingdom. It was internal political problems, not the British army, that caused the fall of Tēwodros.

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[79] *P.P.*, *Report from the Select Committee on the Abyssinian Expedition* (London, 1870), *passim*; Holland and Hozier, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 32 ff., 440 ff., 455 ff.; Markham, *op. cit.*, pp. 204 ff., 314 ff.; Fusella, *op. cit.*, p. 42 ff.

VI

CONCLUSION.

Part of the fascination of Tēwodros' life story lies in the stormy events, of which it was full, his extraordinary rise to power, his restless activities as Emperor, and his violent death. When the sufferings which he caused the Ethiopian people, as well as a handfull of foreigners, are mentioned, he is often defended by his countrymen on the basis that he reunited Ethiopia. But this is far from true in a literal sense. Tēwodros left Ethiopia as disunited as he found it. He had tried to unite it by force, and he had not hesitated to continue with increasingly violent measures to reach the goal. But he had failed. His dream had been to "convert swords and lances into ploughshares and reaping-hooks, and cause a plough-ox to be sold dearer than the noblest war horse".[1] Instead his reign became nothing but one long war which took him nowhere near either Jerusalem or the peaceful era promised in the *Fikkarē Īyesus.*

At the end of his life Tēwodros saw that he had failed. But there was a quality in him which redeemed many of his deeds. Dufton called it patriotism and designated Tēwodros as "the first and only patriot Abyssinia ever saw".[2] It is probably this quality that has made his countrymen admire and love him and made them think that he actually did reunite Ethiopia. And in spite of his failure to achieve this great goal, there is some truth in this idea. Tēwodros is the father of modern Ethiopia in the sense that he conceived the idea of a united, strong, and progressive Ethiopian state, the peer of any other state in the world. He saw the vision, and he gave every

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[1] *Correspondence 1846—1868*, p. 148 ff., Plowden to Clarendon, 25 June 1855.

[2] Dufton, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

ounce of his tremendous energy to the task. This alone will preserve his name in Ethiopian history as that of one of the great leaders of the country, and may well play a rôle in fostering patriotism in his countrymen.

The other fascinating element in Tēwodros' life story is the personal one. His character seems so full of contradictions: mysticism and rationalism, consideration and cruelty, humility and pride. As his feeling of disappointment and frustration grew, his pride and arrogance also seem to have increased, until they bordered on megalomania. He was in many ways so superior to his environment that he could not bear opposition or failure. His actions became less and less predictable or rational. Whether he was at all times fully accountable for what he said and did is at least very doubtful. As former friends and followers deserted him, he must have become an increasingly lonely man, tossed between despair and the forlorn hope of redeeming it all. No one will ever know what his real intentions were when he went to Meqdela, whether he still planned or had begun to let things drift.

The latter is not likely in a man of Tēwodros' temperament, and he was in any case not prepared to submit to ultimate humiliation. If he had to choose he would fall not in the hands of men but of God. In the already quoted document which he drew up just before he made his first attempt to commit suicide, Tēwodros reveals something of his deep despair.[3] The document was written to the British general who had defeated the King's last army the day before. Tēwodros collected his thoughts sufficiently to hand over the responsibility for those who relied on him for protection. His thoughts went to "maids ... widows, and aged parents who have no children". —"See that you forsake not these people." This sense of responsibility for the weak and unprotected had always characterized Tēwodros, and it was still there. When his first attempt to commit suicide failed, he looked around for some further duty and saw to it that all the European captives were released and reached safety. Although they were completely at his mercy not one of them lost his life while under Tēwodros' protection.

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[3] See p. 14, n. 8.

But the document is really addressed not to Sir Robert Napier, but to Tēwodros' countrymen. He speaks no longer as Tēwodros, the King of Kings, but as "Kasa, whose trust is in Christ". He rebukes his people for their lack of courage and loyalty. He scolds them for their narrow-mindedness and their unwillingness to see the vision of *his* Ethiopia. But he also accepts his own share of the blame. He admits that he was only Kasa, only an ordinary human being. It had not been given to him to establish the era of Tēwodros in Ethiopia or in the world. He had tried and failed. This was his word to posterity. Now he would leave by his own free will. The silver-mounted pistol he used had come from beyond the sea, from Queen Victoria, but there is something symbolic in the fact that he died by his own hand. Tēwodros destroyed himself, but something of his spirit survived for later generations to inherit, if they can understand him better than his contemporaries did.

INDEX

Abba Taṭeq, see *Taṭeq*
Abbadie, Antoine d', 31 n.
Abbadie, Arnauld d', 18 n.
Abboyē, Afe-nigus, 78
Abīye-Igzī'i, Church of Abba, 27
Abun, 39 n.
Abune Selama, *see* Selama
Adwa, 78
Agew Nigusē, *see* Nigusē Welde Mīka'ēl
Agewmidir, Agew, 20, 41, 69, 87
Ahmed Grañ, 62
Alefa, 24, 35, 76
Alemayehu Moges, 11, 11 n.
Alemayehu Tēwodros, 56 n.
Alemē, Grazmach, 75, 77
Alī Alula, Ras, 22, 24, 35, 37—43, 46—47, 52, 57, 63—64
Alṭash, Weyzero, 26 n., 27
Alula Gugsa, 22
Amba Çhera, 44
Amba Gishen, 75
Amedamīt, 21
Amedē Beshīr, 75, 78
Amhara, province of, 21
Andawa Haylu, (= Haylu Andawa) 22 n., 23, 26 n.
Andawa Lībo, Dejazmach, 21—22, 26 n., 27—28
Ankober, 52, 78
Arīngo, 69
Armaçheho, 69
Arogē, battle of, 88—89
Aṣē, 15 n., 48
Aseggaheñ, Debtera, 72 n.
Ashebir, 20
Aṣqu, Liq, 23
Attiṭegeb, Weyzero, 16, 17, 26 n., 27—28, 31—32
Austria, 84
Avanchères, Leon d', 73
Ayshal, battle of, 43
Bardel, A., 84—85
Basset, René, 50
Bēgēmdir, 17, 19, 43, 69, 76, 80—82
Beke, Charles T., 44 n.
Belesa, 20
Belew, Dejazmach, 40 n., 42
Bell, John, 56, 62, 70, 79
Bereket, battle of, 53
Bezabih, 78, 80—81
Bezold, Carl, 48 n.
Biru Alīgaz, 40 n., 42
Biru Goshu, 24, 30, 35—36, 38—41, 43, 82
Bītewa, 36
Bītweded, 18
Blanc, Henry, 30 n.
British expedition, 88—89
British government, *see* England
Bruce, James, 17 n., 32, 50
Budge, E.A. Wallis, 50

Cameron, Duncan, 81, 83—87
Captives, the European, 82, 86—89, 91
Catholic missionaries, 39 n., 57, 78, 85
Çhaqo, battle of, 37
Chenker, 28
Chentī Ber, battle of, 24, 30
Çhilga, 17, 41
Chrishona lay missionaries, 58
Church, the Ethiopian, 19, 56—59, 68—72
Conti Rossini, Carlo, 16 n., 42 n., 72 n.
Correspondence 1846—1868, 13 n.
Crimean War, 65, 87
Cronaca reale, 19 n.
Dabarkī, battle of, 39—40
Damot, 61, 69
Dawīt II, 33
Debre Abbay, battle of, 22
Debre Birhan, 52
Debre Tabor, 22, 43, 75, 81—82
  battle of, 35
Debtera, 69
Dejazmach, 16 n.
Delanta, 76, 81
Dembiya, 19—20, 33, 37, 42, 80
Dengel Ber, 41
Deresgē, battle of, 44, 74
Deresgē Maryam Church, 45
Desta Tekle Weld, 60
Dorī Gugsa, Ras, 22
Dufton, Henry, 16 n., 30, 40 n., 73, 90
Egypt, Egyptians, 61—62, 65—66, 70, 83—85
England, 65, 86—88
Ethiopia, its main political divisions in 1800, 19
Europe, Tēwodros' attitude towards, 51, 84, 86—87
Fala, 88
Farīs Alī, 44, 50
Fasīledes, 16
Felasha, 50—51, 58
Fenja, 20, 31
Fikkarē Iyesus, 49, 50 n., 60
Firqa Ber, 38
Fīṣamē Mengist, 18
Fītawrarī, 16 n.
Fitha Negest, 69
Flad, J. Martin, 14 n., 81, 88
France, 65, 78, 85, 87
Fukkera, 32
Fusella, Luigi, 15 n., 26 n., 31 n.
Gafat, 74, 88
Gallas, 18, 59, 75—77, 79—81
Gama, Christopher da, 62
Gared Kinfu, 24 n., 79
Gebrē, Fītawrarī, 88
Gebre Medhin, Wag-shum, 75—76
Gebre Sillasē, Aleqa, 53 n.
Gebru, Dejazmach, 23, 26 n., 28
Genealogies of Tēwodros, 16—17
Ginjar, 20, 36
Girmachew Tekle Hawaryat, 11 n.
Gobat, Samuel, 19 n., 21, 23, 50—51
Gobazē Gebre Medhin, Wag-shum, 80
Gojam, 19, 35, 43, 53, 68—69, 75, 80
Gonder, 40, 71—72, 76, 80
Goshu, Dejazmach, 19—20, 24, 30, 35, 39, 41—42
Grazmach, 16 n.

Guèbrè Sellassié, *see* Gebre Sillasē
Gugsa, Ras, 19, 21
Gur Amba, battle of, 41—42
Gwangwil Wibē, 42 n., 45 n.
Habte Sillasē, Aleqa, 51
Harer, 61
Hayle Maryam, Ras, 19
Hayle Melekot Sahle Sillasē, Nigus, 52—53
Hayle Mīka'ēl Sahle Sillasē, Merdazmach, 53, 75, 77—78
Haylu Niblu, 26 n., 27
Haylu Welde Gīyorgīs, 15, 15 n., 16—17, 26, 26 n., 27—28
Heuglin, Theodor von, 15 n., 42 n.
Hill, Richard, 23 n.
Holland, J. Trevenen, 14 n.
Hozier, Henry, 14 n.
Içhegē, 39 n.
Içhegē Bēt, 38
Idrīs, 36
Igwale Anbesa, 50
Iloha, battle of, 38
Infraz, 16, 31
Ingida, Ras, 53, 75
Injabara, battle of, 80
Inqoqo Wiha, 27
Irīm gedam, 68
Isenberg, Charles William, 51 n.
Islam, 59—60, 83, 85
Itēgē, 25
Iyasu I, 16, 69
Jacobis, Giustino de, 57
Jerusalem, 11, 60—61, 65
Jibela Amba, 43
Kasa (Haylu), Lij, *see* Tēwodros
Kasa Meshesha, Dejazmach, 17 n.
Kasa Sebagadis, 78
Khartum, 61
Kibre Negest, 48
Kinfu (Haylu), Dejazmach, 17, 21—24, 26, 26 n., 27—30, 31 n., 32, 62
Kinfu, Wag-shum, 20—21
Koso, the *koso*-vendor, 27 n., 31, 31 n., 37
Koso Ber, battle of, 20, 28—29
Krapf, J. Lewis, 15 n., 73
Lasta, 19, 33, 43, 69, 75—76, 80
Lejean, Guillaume. 15 n., 40 n., 51, 73 n., 85
Līben, Dejazmach, 75
Lij, 26 n.
Littmann, Enno, 13 n.
Mahbere Sillasē, convent of, 29—30
Mahṣentu, Içhegē, 39
Markham, Clements R., 30 n.
Maru, Dejazmach, 19—20, 26 n., 27, 29 n.
Maryē Gugsa, Ras, 21—22
Massaja, Guglielmo, 39 n.
Massawa, 61, 83
Meçha, 69
Mekwennin Indalkachew, 11 n.
Mekwennin Kinfu, 23—24, 30, 68
Menen, Itēgē, 22, 24—25, 35—39
Menz, 52
Meqdela, 52, 75, 77, 81—82, 88—89
Merewether, W. L., 82
Merso Hayle Maryam, 35
Mesfin, 16 n.
Mesfine Qwara, 15
Meshesha Tēwodros, 56
Messiah, 50
Metemma, 20, 84

Mewat Alefa, 27
Meysa, 31 n.
Mīka'ēl Sihul, Ras, 17
Minīlik II, 53, 81
Minjar, 53
Mintiwwab, Itēgē, 32, 32 n.
Miṭriha, 27
Mondon-Vidailhet, Casimir, 15 n.
Moorehead, Alan, 12, 12 n.
Moreno, Martino Mario, 13 n.
Muhammed Ali Pasha, 22
Muslims, *see* Islam
Napier, Sir Robert, 14 n., 88, 91—92
Napoleon III, 78, 84—85
Nechīt, Weyzero, 26 n.
Negarīt, 33
Nigus, *Niguse Negest*, 15 n.
Nigusē Welde Mīka'ēl, 67—68, 75—79, 83
Nuovi documenti, 19 n.
Pais, Pero, 62
Pankhurst, Richard, 74 n.
Parkyns, Mansfield, 36 n.
Plowden, Walter, 12, 33, 40 n., 43—44, 51—52, 58—59, 61, 63—65, 70, 73, 75, 77, 79, 87
Prideaux, W. F., 73
Protestant missionaries, 58, 85—86
Prussia, 84
Qeñazmach, 16 n.
Qerlos, Coptic Patriarch, 70—71, 83
Qinē, 11 n.
Qwara, 15, 29, 32—33, 36
Qwareñña, 33
Qwelleñña, 33
Qwinzila, battle of, 24
Qworeba, battle of, 38
Ras, 16 n.
Rashid, battle of, 22—23
Rassam, Hormuzd, 16 n., 25, 73, 82, 87—88
Red Sea coast, 61, 83—84
Rosenthal, H., 86
Royal Chronicle, 18 n.
Rüppell, Eduard, 18 n., 21
Russel, Count Stanislas, 78
Russell, Lord John, 86
Russia, 65, 84, 87
Sahle Dingil, Emperor, 18, 24, 39, 50
Sahle Sillasē, King, 47, 57, 63
Sapeto, Giuseppe, 26 n.
Sawdiba, stronghold of Tēwodros 40 n.
Sebagadis, Ras, 22, 63
Ṣegedē, 69
Selama, Abune, 35, 39, 39 n., 44, 57—58, 61, 70—71
Sendeq, 33
Seqela Werka, battle of, 37
Seyfe Ar'id, Emperor, 16
Seyfu Sahle Sillasē, 78
Seyid Pasha, 70, 83
Shewa, 19, 52—53, 61, 69, 75, 78, 80—81
Shifta, 11
Simēn, 19, 38, 44, 67, 69
Sinnar, 39
"Slave of Christ", 51, 59
Solomon, line of, 18—19
"Son of Grace", 57
Stern, Henry A., 15 n., 45 n., 58, 85—86
Sudan, 61—62
Takrurī, 20

Ṭaqusa, 37, 42
Taṭeq, 31 n.
Ṭaytu Biṭul, 11 n., 12
Tedla Gwalu, 67—68, 75, 80—82
Tekle Gīyorgīs Fiqr Segid, 18, 24, 50
Tekle Haymanot, Abba, 16, 39 n., 71 n.
Tekle-Tsadik Mekouria, 60 n.
Tesemma Welde Mīka'ēl, 67, 76, 78—79
Tewabech, Itēgē, 37, 37 n., 44, 56, 76
Tēwodros, legendary king, 49—51
Tēwodros I, 50
Tēwodros II,
  army of, 54, 62—63, 72—74, 81
  attachment to his mother, 32, 32 n.
  birth of, 15, 27—28
  character of, 12, 31, 46, 51—52, 56—57, 91
  education of, 28—29, 29 n., 30
  foreign policy of, 60—62, 64—66, 83—87
  life as a *shifta*, 11, 36
  opinion of Plowden about, 13
  reforms of, 53—55, 62—63
  relationship to Maru and Kinfu, 20, 25, 29, 29 n., 31, 31 n.
  reputation of, 11—14
  royal ancestry, 16—17, 48—49
  "Three births", 57
Tigrē, 17—19, 22, 61, 69, 76, 78—79
Ṭimṭim, 68
Ṭiruwerq or Ṭirunesh, Weyzero, 56
Ṭiso Gobazē, 80
Tsegaye Gebre Medhin, 11 n.
Tubiana, Joseph, 26 n., 31 n.
Turkey, Turks, 65, 84
Vicende dell'Etiopia, 16 n.
Victoria, Queen, 11, 48, 79, 84, 86—87
Wad Kaltabu, battle of, 22—23
Wadla, 75—76, 81
Wag, 19
Wag-shum, 33
Waldibba, 18, 79
Wegera, 20, 38, 76, 79
Weld Blundell, H., 18 n.
Welde Gīyorgīs, 26 n.
Welde Gīyorgīs Haylu, *see* Haylu Welde Gīyorgīs
Welde Maryam, Aleqa, 15 n., 25
Welde Mīka'ēl, Agew chief, 67
Welde Sillasē, Ras, 63
Welde Teklē, Dejazmach, 21, 21 n., 23—24
Welette Teklē, Weyzero 21, 21 n., 22 n., 23, 26 n., 27
Wello, 43, 52, 69, 75—77, 79—80
Welqayīt, 69, 80
Wend Yirad, Qeñazmach, 31 n., 37
Were Hīmano, 59, 69, 75
Werqītu, Weyzero, 52
Wibē Hayle Maryam, Dejazmach, 19—22, 24, 33, 35, 38, 42—44, 56, 62—63, 67, 74
Ye-fiyyel ireñña, 33
Ye-Habesha bal, 60
Ye-Īyerusalēm Īçhoñña, 60
Yeju, 18, 43, 52, 69, 75
Ye-Maru Qimis, 21, 24, 35
Ye-mesqel merēt, 68
Ye-meysa lij, 26 n., 31 n.
Ye-Werq Wiha, 21

Yibaba, 69
Yilma Kinfu, 23—24, 30
Yimam Gugsa, Ras, 19—20, 28
Yohannis III, 24, 38
Yohannis IV, 85
Zemene Mesafint, 17, 19 n., 43, 50
Zeneb, Debtera, 13, 13 n., 15 n., 25, 36—37, 43, 48, 56, 68, 73, 77

KEY TO TRANSLITERATION

CONSONANTS

Where no explanation is given the consonants or combinations of consonants have their normal English pronunciation.

ሀ, ሐ, ኀ, (ኸ) — *h*
ለ — *l*
መ — *m*
ሠ, ሰ — *s*
ሸ — *sh*
ረ — *r*
ቀ — *q* (a glottalized *k*-sound)
በ — *b*
ተ — *t*
ቸ — *ch*
ነ — *n*
ኘ — *ñ* (*ñ* in Spanish *señor*)
አ, ዐ — ’ (only between vowels to signify glottal stop)
ከ — *k*
ዘ — *z*
ዠ — *zh* (*s* in *pleasure*, *j* in French *je*)
ወ — *w*
የ — *y* (*y* in *you*)
ደ — *d*
ጀ — *j*
ገ — *g* (*g* in *get*)
ጠ — *ṭ* (a glottalized *t* - sound)
ጨ — *c̣h* (as *ch* but glottalized)
ጰ — *p̣* (a glottalized *p* - sound)
ጸ, ፀ — *ṣ* (a sibilant *t* as in German *Zeit* but glottalized)
ፈ — *f*
ፐ — *p*
ቈ — *qw*
ኈ — *hw*
ኰ — *kw*
ጐ — *gw*

VOWELS

Since Amharic vowels are rather difficult to describe in terms of English vowel sounds, the equivalents given here must be regarded as approximations only.

First order	(በ)	— *e*	(between *e* in English *bet* and in French *le*)
Second	(ቡ)	— *u*	(between *u* in *full* and *rule*)
Third	(ቢ)	— *ī*	(*i* in *machine*)
Fourth	(ባ)	— *a*	(between *a* in *father* and *u* in *fun*)
Fifth	(ቤ)	— *ē*	(somewhat less open than *e* in *lend*)
Sixth	(ብ)	— *i*	(between *i* in *quick* and *girl* but always short; omitted when no vowel sound is heard)
Seventh	(ቦ)	— *o*	(as *oa* in *board*)

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